

1454

VILLAGE SERMON

ON THE

CHIEF ARTICLES OF FAITH, &c.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER,

SOME OF THE RELATIVE DUTIES.

BY THE REV.

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ARCHDEACON OF BERKS.

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TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF THE
PARISHES OF SHRIVENHAM AND ENGLEFIELD,
IN THE COUNTY OF BERKS.

MY DEAR PARISHIONERS,

THE volume which I now put into your hands, has no pretensions to novelty of argument or of illustration. My object is, in a plain way to call your attention to certain important doctrines, which, as members of the Church of England, you all acknowledge; and to point out the practical effects real belief in these doctrines ought to produce upon your hearts and conduct.

You were long since taught, that the chief Articles of Faith are, belief in God the Father, who created; in God the Son, who redeemed; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth you. These are the doctrines which I here wish to impress upon your

DEDICATION.

mus. And since we can neither believe nor do any thing well without the grace of God, I have added Five Sermons on some of the principal means of obtaining that grace, and of renewing and strengthening within you firm religious principles. Permit me to hope, that you will peruse this little volume with seriousness and attention, particularly at those seasons to which the discourses which it contains are particularly appropriate:—the Sermon on Redemption, on Good Friday; that on the Holy Spirit, on Whit Sunday; and that on Judgment, in the season of Advent. To the discourse on the Baptismal Vow, I humbly request the attention of all; but especially that of *parents*, when they bring a child to be baptized; and that of those, who by sickness or any other affliction are solemnly admonished “to remember the profession which they “made unto God in their Baptism.” The times in which we live, and my persuasion of the justness of the claims of the ministerial office to attention and respect, induced me to add the Sermon on the Christian Priesthood.

In the Sermons on the Christian Character, which stand next, I by no means pretend to give a complete body of Christian duty. I merely wish to enforce the cultivation of such virtues, as, from the observations which I have made, seemed most to

DEDICATION.

require notice. As an introduction to what follows, I first endeavour to convince you, that real *practical holiness* is the great design of the Christian dispensation. Then, as the *love of God*¹ is styled by our Lord the first and great commandment, I give to *that* the first place in my statement of particular duties. To the love of God, the love of the world is one of the chief obstacles; I therefore proceed to caution you against the spiritual dangers which are occasioned by *the things of the world*²,—and the *men of the world*³. *Afflictions*⁴ may, by unthinking persons, be looked upon as tokens of God's displeasure, and may consequently tend to lessen our love to him. I have added, therefore, a Sermon on the temper with which afflictions ought to be borne. Next follows *humility*⁵, a grace or virtue of the utmost importance with respect to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. The *love of man*⁷ is the ground-work of all the duties of the second table, and seemed to demand particular consideration. The subjects of most of the following Sermons⁸ were suggested by the latter part of the fifth chapter to the Ephesians, in which St. Paul mentions the virtues which ought to characterize him, who has “put on the new

¹ Sermon. XII. ² Sermon. XIII. ³ Sermon. XIV.

⁴ Sermon. XV. ⁵ Sermon. XVI. ⁶ Sermon. XVII.

⁷ Sermon. XVIII. ⁸ Sermons XIX, XX, XXI, XXII, & XXIII.

DEDICATION.

*Rash-judging*¹, and *evil-speaking*², are vices so prevalent, that I felt it right particularly to warn you against them. The Sermon on *charity*³ is added, as a sort of summary of the several discourses which precede it.

In Sermons on subjects so nearly related to each other, you will probably find many instances of repetition. I did not take much pains to avoid, or to correct this, as the duties which I inculcate, require to be enforced with “line upon line, and precept upon precept.” The repetition of the quotations from Scripture cannot be otherwise than useful.

Possibly some persons may think, that I ought not to have omitted the too common vices of swearing, drunkenness, and unchastity. But I was unwilling to increase unnecessarily the size of the volume; and, against these vices, there are on the list of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, several excellent little Tracts, ready at all times to be distributed among you, “as need shall require and occasion shall be given.”

I have added Six Sermons on some of the most important of the *Relative Duties*.

¹ Sermon. XXIV.

² Sermon. XXV.

³ Sermon. XXVI.

DEDICATION.

When St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians and the Colossians, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called,"—to live as becomes Christians;—and when he tells them, that the true Christian doctrine—"the truth as it is in Jesus,"—is that which teaches "to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,"—"and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness:"—he goes on to mention, particularly, several of those sins which real Christians must avoid, and several of those moral graces, those virtues in heart and conduct, which Christians should endeavour to acquire. Among these virtues, a distinguished place is assigned, in both Epistles, to attention to the *relative duties*;—those duties which result from the several relations of husband and wife, of parent and child, of master and servant. The enforcement of these duties occupies a considerable part of the two concluding chapters of each of these Epistles; and it appeared to me to be a most fit subject for the pastoral addresses of a minister of the Gospel *now*.

In a similar manner, among the moral precepts towards the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, much stress is laid by St. Paul upon the observance of the duties of *subjects*; duties which are strongly enforced also by St. Peter in his first Epistle.

DEDICATION.

With respect to all the relative duties, I would make one observation; which is, that they are not in such a sense reciprocal, as that if one party should fail in the performance of those which peculiarly belong to him, the other is thereby justified in being guilty of a similar neglect. Upon this subject, however, I shall take the liberty to make use of the words of a living writer, who is equally distinguished for fairness and candour of mind, and for accuracy of reasoning. "The relations existing among mankind, in which there are duties required on both sides, may be divided into two classes; those in which the parties are mutually *responsible to each other*, and those in which they are *not*. To the former class belong all partnerships, mercantile bargains, and, in short, the great mass of voluntary dealings between man and man. In all these cases, not only is each party bound in conscience to the fulfilment of his part of the agreement, but being responsible to each other for that fulfilment, if either party fail in performing his engagement, the other is at once released from his obligation, by the dissolution of this conditional compact.—The other class of relations is of a widely different nature. It comprehends not only that between governor and subject, but between parent and child, between kindred in general, between husband and wife, and between every man and his neighbours. In all these cases, there are indeed obligations on both sides, but the parties are *not* mutually re-

sponsible to each other. Parents are no less in conscience to take care of their children, than children to honour their parents; and to God the parents are responsible for the performance of this duty; but let not children suppose that every neglect of duty on the part of the parent absolves them from theirs¹." The case is similar with respect to the other relative duties.

That the Sermons now published may be instrumental in promoting the glory of God and the edification of those who read them, is the sincere wish and prayer of

Your affectionate Pastor,

EDWARD BERENS.

¹ See Mr. Whately's excellent Sermon, "The Christian Duty of Obedience to Rulers," preached Jan. 30, 1821.



CONTENTS.

Sermon	Page
I. Faith	1
II. Belief in God the Father	12
III. Belief in God the Son	27
IV. On a Future Judgment	43
V. Belief in God the Holy Ghost	57
VI. Reading the Scriptures.....	73
VII. Prayer.....	90
VIII. Public Worship	104
IX. Baptismal Vow*	121
X. The Lord's Supper.....	136
XI. The Christian Priesthood	
XII. Holiness the Design of Christianity ..	172
XIII. The Love of God... ..	186
XIV. Worldly-mindedness	201
XV. Conformity to the World	213
XVI. Resignation	226
XVII. Humility	241
XVIII. Love of our Neighbour	258

! Sermon	Page
XIX. Speaking the Truth	278
XX. Honesty	288
XXI. Anger	292
XXII. Forgiveness of Injuries	317
XXIII. Envy	331
XXIV. Rash judging and Censoriousness ..	346
XXV. Evil-speaking	363
XXVI. Railing and abusive Language	380
XXVII. Charity	392
<hr/>	
XXVIII. Duty of married Persons.....	409
XXIX. Duty of Parents	425
XXX. Duty of Children	444
XXXI. Duty of Masters	457
XXXII. Duty of Servants.....	475
XXXIII. Duty of Subjects	485

SERMON I.

FAITH.

2 COR. xiii. 5.

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves.”

I KNOW not any admonition in the Scriptures which has a stronger claim to our attention, than that which calls upon us to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

In discoursing on this subject, it is my intention, First, to speak of the necessity of Faith; Secondly, to point out certain marks or tokens, by which we may judge, whether we are in the Faith or not; and, Thirdly, to mention some of the means of increasing and strengthening Faith.

By Faith, I mean that strong belief of the truths revealed to us in the word of God, which disposes us to perform what is there commanded;—such belief, particularly of those doctrines, which are shortly brought together in the Apostles' Creed.

I. The necessity of faith is self-evident; for there can be no religion at all without

faith. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him¹." The purpose of religion is, to teach us how to please God; but, "without faith it is impossible to please him²." It appears that the object which God had in view, when he made a revelation of himself to the world, was the deliverance of men from a state of sin, and consequently of misery and death, and the leading them on to holiness of living, and happiness. The attainment of this object was one great reason why he sent his Son down upon earth; for he came, we are told, to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works³;" he came to teach us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world⁴." In order to be thus zealous of good works, in order to live thus soberly, righteously, and godly, the corruption of man's nature must be subdued, its bent or bias to evil must be overcome, some of his strongest passions and appetites and desires must be resisted and denied. To prevail upon him to do this, very powerful motives are necessary; and such motives, the most powerful and prevailing possible, are supplied by faith. "Faith," says the apostle, "is the substance of things

¹ Heb. xi. 6. ² Ibid. ³ Titus ii. 14. ⁴ Titus ii. 12.

“hoped for, the evidence of things not seen that is, a lively faith “gives such a reality, “certainty, and present being, to things “hoped for, and yet to come, as if they were “visibly seen and actually enjoyed².” Such faith alarms our fears on the one hand, by the threatening of never-ending torments, and invites our hopes on the other, by the promise of eternal happiness; and by the contemplation of the awful humiliation of the Son of God, and of his dreadful sufferings for our sake, excites a hatred of sin, and enforces obedience and holiness of living by the strongest motives to thankfulness and love. Indeed, so essential is faith to genuine holiness of living, that (as we are taught by the Scriptures, and from them by our Church) no works, however fair they may be in outward appearance, are really good and acceptable to God, unless they proceed from a principle of faith. Conduct or actions proceeding entirely from worldly views and motives, must not look beyond this world for their recompence. They have their reward, if they have it at all, *here*, and here only. As they have nothing to do with the motives, so they have nothing to do with the promises of religion.

But farther, the necessity of faith appears most strongly, after the consideration, that faith is the instrument or condition of our

¹ Heb. xi. 1.

² Burkitt.

~~justification~~. As sinners, (and if we say that we are not sinners, we may be sure that we deceive ourselves, and that the truth is not in us:)—as sinners, I say, we are liable to God's wrath and condemnation. Now, if we at all believe the word of God, we must know, that we have no well-grounded hope of escaping that condemnation, excepting what we derive from the atonement made by the death of his Son. The benefits, however, of that atonement, (in the case at least of those to whom the Gospel is preached), are extended to those only who believe in it, to those only who have *faith*. Hence it is that justification is by the Scriptures, and from the Scriptures by our Church, attributed to *faith*; by which word they mean, not a barren speculative assent of the understanding, but a belief which has effect on the heart, by producing holy dispositions and affections; and on the conduct, by producing good works;—*faith*, in short, *which worketh by love*, love both to God and man.

Since therefore faith is so necessary; since without faith there can be no real religion; since faith is so essential to good works and holiness of living; since without faith it is impossible to please God, impossible to be justified; the inquiry whether we are in the faith, becomes of the very greatest importance. Allow me then, my friends, to adopt the admonition of the apostle, and anxiously

and earnestly to exhort you to "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." There are, it is possible, in existence some of those fools who say in their hearts, that there is no God, and are even daring enough to avow their mad unbelief with their lips. There are others, who while they profess to believe in God, yet refuse to believe in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. To such men I am not now speaking. You profess and call yourselves Christians; and not only Christians in general, but members of the Church of England. As such, you take part in the Church-service, and join in saying the Apostles' Creed. But allow me to ask, may there not be some among you, who have never paid attention to the several articles of which that Creed consists? who have never considered what they mean by the words which they use? who, having been born in a Christian country, of Christian parents, take it for granted that they are Christians as a matter of course, without considering seriously whether they are Christians in reality, or only in name and profession? Permit me then to ask you, do you really believe what you say you believe? Are you really persuaded of the truth of these leading articles of faith; and does your belief show itself to be real, by the effects which it produces on your hearts and lives? These are certainly very important questions; but important and

obvious as they are, I fear that there may be some, whose consciences cannot give them an answer of peace. To what are justly considered as the chief articles in the Creed, I mean to call your attention hereafter: but try yourselves by any one of the plainest and most acknowledged doctrines of religion; take, for instance, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments; do you really believe in these things? are you really persuaded that after death you will come to life again, and exist for ever, either in happiness or in misery? Certainly if you really do believe this, it ought to have an influence upon every part of your conduct. It might well be expected, that the thoughts of a future state would never be long out of your head. The alternative, whether we shall be for ever happy in the presence of God, or whether we shall be for thousands and thousands of years—TO ALL ETERNITY—tormented with the devil and his angels in that sad fire which never shall be quenched, is an alternative so awfully serious, that it should seem impossible to be indifferent about it, impossible not to think of it often, impossible not to live with a constant view to it. But is this the case with us? Are there none who are careless about religion, who appear to be indifferent as to what may become of them in another world? Can we consider such men as really believing?

Suppose, like the martyr Stephen, you saw heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and that you were allowed actually to behold the glory and happiness of that blessed place, would you not wish and strive to be admitted there? Or suppose, on the other hand—dreadful as the supposition is—yet suppose, that you actually saw the miseries of the condemned; that you beheld that horrible place, of which our Lord says ¹, the fire never shall be quenched: suppose you saw the wretched guilty tormented in that flame, and witnessed their weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth! would not the sight prevail upon you to leave your sins, and to try to work out your salvation with fear and trembling; to be *religious* in good earnest? But remember, that “faith is the “evidence of things not seen,” and ought to have the *same* effect upon us. A man who *really* believes in heaven and hell, will naturally wish and try—try in good earnest—to obtain the one, and avoid the other.

All the concerns of common life are carried on by a sort of faith. Why does the merchant leave the wife of his bosom, and the endearments of his children, and the comforts of his home, and encounter hardships and danger in distant lands? Because he *believes* that his adventure will be for his advan-

¹ Mark ix. 43, &c.

tage, and will increase his wealth and the means of future enjoyment. Why does the farmer rise early, and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, and spend large sums of money in tilling and preparing the ground? because he *believes* that a harvest will come, which will repay all that he has laid out with increase. Why does the labourer bear the burden and heat of the day, and spend his strength in the cultivation of another man's field? Because he *believes* that at the week's end he shall receive his wages. If we *really believe* in a future state, ought not our belief to have a like effect upon us? If we *really believe* in the kingdom of heaven, shall we not regard it as a pearl of great price, which well deserves that we should, if it is necessary, part with every thing in order to obtain it¹? If we *really believe* that he, who in good earnest worketh the work of God, who tries zealously, in reliance on God's grace, to lead a holy life, shall gather fruit unto life eternal; will not such belief induce us to labour as steadily and earnestly *at least* as those who work for earthly wages? If instead of regarding the care of the soul as the one thing needful, we attend to it but little, or not at all; if, instead of seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place², we seek the

good things' of this world, or the gratification, of our own lusts, or appetites, or fancies, before and more than the kingdom of heaven; surely we show that our profession of faith is a mere pretence, or that, at the best, our faith is miserably weak.

Perhaps this part of the subject may be placed in a stronger point of view, if we are somewhat more particular, and shortly reflect upon some of the peculiar properties or offices of faith. One of its properties is, that it enables us to overcome the world; "this" "is the victory that overcometh the world," "even our faith¹." Now consider seriously, have you, my friends, overcome the world, or does the world overcome you? You renounced the pomps and vanity of the world at your baptism. If, notwithstanding this renunciation, you so far attend to these pomps and vanities as to neglect any of the duties of religion; or if you are so far careful and troubled about the business of the world, or the work of your calling, as to neglect the care of your souls, you are wanting in faith. So again you show a cowardly want of faith, if the fear of being laughed at by the world, the fear of being called righteous over-much, deters you from what you know to be your duty. Or do you say, that you wish to be religious, but that the temptations which you meet with

¹ 1 John v. 4.

are too strong for you to resist? Recollect, that if you take “the shield of faith,” you will be able with it—“to quench all “the fiery darts of the wicked;” to overcome all the temptations of the devil¹; and “that all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Again, true faith worketh by love². If you are destitute of love to God, if you are wanting in love and good-will to man, if you nourish in your bosoms any feelings of envy, hatred, or malice, your faith is imperfect and weak.

In short, as I remarked near the beginning of this discourse, a good life, general holiness of living, is the proper offspring of real faith. St. Peter bids us to add to our faith virtue. St. Paul charges them that have believed to be careful to maintain good works³. St. James exhorts us to show our faith by our works⁴, and assures us that “faith without “works is dead⁵.” If we are devoid of virtue, if we are *not* careful to maintain good works, to lead a good life, we may be sure, either that we have no real faith, or that our faith, if it exist at all, is weak, and nigh unto death. Take heed, my brethren, I cannot too earnestly exhort and beseech you, to “take “heed,—lest there be in any of you an evil

¹ Ephes. vi. 16.

² Gal. v. 6.

³ Tit. iii. 1.

⁴ James ii. 18.

⁵ James ii. 20.

“heart of unbelief, in departing from the “living God¹.” If, upon examining “your-selves whether ye be in the faith,” you find reason to fear that you are not, or that, at least, your faith is sadly weak and defective, lose not a moment, I beg you, in seeking to obtain that, which is so essential to your salvation. Endeavour, in reliance upon God’s help, to remove or subdue whatever within you is likely to prevent the growth of faith. Unbelief is generally the fault of the heart, rather than of the head. Men often do not believe, because they *will not*. “Ye will not “come unto me,” said our Saviour, “that “ye might have life² ;” men sometimes love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; “for every one that doeth “evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the “light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” Men sometimes refuse to believe, or, at least, to pay attention to the main doctrines of religion, because they know, that those doctrines reprove their present course of life, and would make them uneasy if they continued to give way to their lusts and appetites. In short, they are against religion, because religion is against them.

Above all, strive to root out from your heart all pride and vanity. Pride is the greatest hindrance possible to faith. One of

¹ Heb. iii. 12.² John v. 40.³ John iii. 19, 20.

the characteristics of pride is, that it exalts itself against God, and prevents men from submitting to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel. Vanity, and an excessive love of the praise of men, has a like tendency. "How can ye believe," says our Lord, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"

Having, by divine aid, removed these and other obstacles to the growth of faith, you must make constant use of the appointed means for its cultivation and increase. One of the chief of these is attention to the holy Scriptures. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Scriptures contain all that we are of necessity required to believe. Be diligent therefore in searching the Scriptures, in attending to the word of God, whether read or preached, and make it the guide and rule both of your faith and practice.

Partaking of the Lord's Supper is another efficacious mean of increasing and strengthening faith, to which we ought constantly to have recourse.

Faith is the gift of God, and one of the distinguishing graces of the Holy Spirit. From him we should seek it in fervent and persevering prayer; fervent and persevering, as proceeding from a heart, which knows

¹ John v. 44.

² Rom. x. 17.

that it is undone, if it obtains not what it asks. We should say with the afflicted father in St. Mark, " Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief¹:" or with the apostles, " Lord, increase our faith²."

Being thus, by the aid of the Spirit of God, grounded and established in the faith; and showing our faith to be real and active, by the effects which it produces upon our temper and conduct; we shall at length, through the merits and death of Christ, receive " the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls³," shall be admitted into that abode of blessedness, where faith shall be terminated in sight, and hope in never-ending enjoyment.

¹ Mark ix. 24.

² Luke xvii. 5.

³ 1 Pet. i. 9.

SERMON II.

BELIEF IN GOD THE FATHER.

TITUS i. 16.

“ They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.”

HAVING discoursed to you upon the necessity of faith in general, and upon some of its properties, some of the marks by which we may be enabled to judge, whether it exists in us in reality or only in pretence; I now wish to direct your attention more particularly to the great article of faith, BELIEF IN GOD; and to the practical effects, which such belief ought to produce on our conduct.

Belief in God, is the first principle, the foundation, of all religion. “ He that cometh to God must believe that He is¹. ”

Whether the idea of a God is implanted in the mind of man by his Creator; or whether, as is more probable, it has been handed down from the first parents of the human race, and by them communicated to all their descendants,—there is hardly any nation upon the

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

face of the earth, which has not some notion of a Supreme Being, to whom prayer and praise are to be addressed. Where the idea has once been entertained, it gains support among all men of thought and reflection, from the contemplation of the works of nature and providence. Thus the apostle argues, that among the nations God left not himself without witness, giving them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness¹. And thus the Psalmist, “the heavens declare the glory of God, and “the firmament sheweth his handy work:” “their sound is gone out into all lands, and “their words unto the end of the world².” This latter passage is expressly applied to our present purpose by St. Paul, when, speaking of the corruption and consequent condemnation of the heathens, he says, that the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen by the things that are made³. This argument is of a plain and convincing nature. When we consider any piece of workmanship, as, for instance, a house, or a watch, we are satisfied that it must have had some maker: and in proportion as the several parts, of which such piece of workmanship consists, appear to be well contrived, and fitted to answer the purposes for

¹ Acts xiv. 17.² Psalm xix. 1, 4.³ Rom. i. 20.

which they are designed, is our opinion of the maker's ability and skill. And thus when we contemplate either the fair frame of the universe, or any of the objects of nature around us, we feel convinced that they must have had a Creator, "that their builder and maker is God;" and both the vastness of some of his works, and the minuteness of others, as well as the fitness of every thing, and of every part of every thing, to the end for which it was intended, furnish proof of the unbounded power and wisdom of their great Author. Whether we consider the heavens the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he has ordained¹; or whether we turn our attention to the members and motions of our own bodies, and reflect how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; or whether we contemplate the meanest insect that crawls on the earth, or the humblest plant that grows, our minds must be equally led to admire the power, and the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator.

I am fully persuaded, my friends, that you all acknowledge these things; I am persuaded, that you are sensible that it is the fool, and the fool only, who can say in his heart, There is no God; I am persuaded, that you all profess to believe in GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.

¹ Psalm yiii. 3.

But do you really and truly believe in him ; Do you believe in him such as he is represented in the Scriptures ? Does your belief show itself to be real in your words, and in your actions ? Suffer me in two or three instances, to call your attention to what is said of God in the Scriptures, and to point out some of the practical effects, which belief in him ought to produce. I most earnestly beg of you, as I proceed, to ask your own consciences, whether such effects have been produced in you ?

The Scriptures then represent God as being every where present, as seeing every thing that we do, hearing every word that passes our lips, and witnessing every thought of our hearts. “He that planted the ear, “shall he not hear ? Or he that made the eye, “shall not he see¹ ?” He is about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. If we say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover us, then shall our night be turned into day, for the darkness is no darkness with God ; the darkness and light to him are both alike². The same Scripture assures us, that there is not a word in our tongue, but God knoweth it altogether ; that he understandeth our thoughts long before, and spieth out the secret thoughts and intents of the heart³. They tell us, that “the eyes of the Lord are

¹ Psalm xciv. 9.² Psalm cxxxix. 2. 10, 11.³ Psalm cxxxix. 4. 1.

“in every place beholding the⁴ evil and the “good¹ :” that he “is a God of judgment²,” and “by him actions are weighed³ ;” that “the Lord alloweth the righteous, but the “ungodly and him that delighteth in wickedness doth his soul abhor⁴ .”

Do we, my friends, seriously believe these things ? Do we live, and do we speak, like men who are sensible that they are continually in the presence of God, that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without displeasure ? Consider how you act when in the presence of some man, to whom you look up with respect ; who, as you think, will blame or punish you, if you do or say any thing that is wrong. In the presence of such a person you would not be guilty of drunkenness, or indecency ; you would not steal, nor swear, nor in any way speak unadvisedly with your lips. And shall the presence of man, of a fellow-worm, make you thus guarded in your behaviour, and shall not the presence of the great God in which you continually are, have equal weight with you ? If a man is guilty of pilfering, or stealing, or any other sin, because he thinks that no one’s eye is upon him ; or, if he gives way to fleshly lust, or any other wickedness, because he thinks the darkness shall cover him, he

¹ Prov. xv. 3.² Isaiah xxx. 18.³ 1 Sam. ii. 3.⁴ Psalm xi. 6.

acts like an¹ unbeliever. Though he professes that he knows God, he denies him in his works.

It is one of the marks of a good man that he sets the Lord always before him¹; that he lives with a constant view to his presence; that the habitual feeling and language of his heart is, "thou God seest me." And it is a mark of the wicked man, "that God is not "in all his thoughts²:" he is represented as saying "the Lord shall not see, neither shall "the God of Jacob regard it³." Which of these characters, my friends, do we most resemble? Is God much in our thoughts, or do we think of him but little or not at all? Are we preserved from sin by a sense of his presence, or do we speak and act, as if we believed that there was no God to take notice of our conduct?

If we really believe that God's eye is continually upon us, certainly such belief ought to make us guarded and circumspect in our actions, our words, and our thoughts. If we are not thus guarded, we have cause to fear that we are wanting in faith in the first great article of religion, that we believe but imperfectly in God the Father Almighty.

It may here be proper to notice an error which is very dangerous and I fear very pre-

¹ Psalm xvi. 9.

Psalm x. 4.

³ Psalm xciv. 7.

valent. The error I mean of those men, who though they profess to believe, and really do believe in God, yet imagine him to be so abundant in mercy, that he will not punish the sins of men, at least not the particular sins of which they themselves are guilty. They are truly taught that God is merciful and gracious, and therefore suppose that he will pass over their transgressions, even though they wilfully persist in them; especially if their transgressions are of such a nature, as not to be clearly and immediately injurious to their neighbour, or not glaringly hurtful to the well-being of society. The mistaken courtesy, or, what is called goodness of the world, encourages them in their error, and nourishes the persuasion that God will see no faults in men who are *nobody's enemies but their own*. The ministers of religion have too often reason to lament this fatal delusion. It repeatedly happens to us, when endeavouring to turn men from the evil of their doings, by setting before them the terrors of the Lord, to hear them express their belief, that the threatenings of God's word would not be carried into execution.

But consider, my friends, that men who hold this idea, if they believe in God at all, do not believe in the God of the Scriptures, but in an idol of their own imaginations. The Scriptures indeed represent God as mer-

ciful and gracious, and, for the sake of his Son, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin to the truly penitent. But as he is merciful, so is he also just and true; and both his truth and his justice appear to require the infliction of punishment upon those who refuse to embrace his offer of mercy, and walk on still in their wickedness. He is spoken of accordingly as a “consuming fire¹,” to the impenitent, as a God who “will by no means clear the guilty²,” as one, who will execute wrath upon every soul that doeth evil, and that refuses to turn from the evil of his doings with hearty repentance, and lively faith in the merits of a Redeemer. I beg of you to believe, that if a man, in defiance of the threatenings of God’s word, shall still “bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in the Scriptures shall lie upon him³.” If, in short, you so far presume upon God’s mercy as to think that you may fearlessly continue in wilful sin; if you imagine that he will so forget his justice and his truth, as that one event will happen

¹ Deut. iv. 24. Heb. xii. 29. ² Exod. xxxiv. 7.

³ Deut. xix. 19, 20.

unto all, and that the wicked will not fare worse than the righteous; you do not believe in God as he is revealed in the Bible; you cannot consistently join in the Apostles' Creed; you cannot say, I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, in the sense in which that profession is made by real Christians.

One of the most interesting features in the representations which the Scriptures give of the Most High, is his providential, his *fatherly* care of all the works of his hands. We profess to believe in God the *Father* Almighty:—the Father in a peculiar sense, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father also of the whole creation, and in particular of man; *our Father*, as he graciously permits us to call him. He not only at first made every living creature, but still continues to watch over and uphold them by the word of his power. He preserveth both man and beast, and “giveth food to all flesh¹.” Holy David says of the brute creation, “these wait all “upon thee, that thou mayest give them “meat in due season: when thou givest it “them they gather it, and when thou openest “thine hand they are filled with good².” And with regard to ourselves, he is styled the *Preserver of men*; we are told that “in him “we live, and move, and have our being.”

¹ Psalm cxxxvi. 25.

“

² Psalm civ. 27, 28.

We are assured that they that fear the Lord “shall want no manner of thing that is good;” that he hath said, “I will never leave thee “nor forsake thee.” Surely, my friends, if we believe these things, if we thus believe in God the *Father* Almighty, it will have a strong tendency to prevent our being over-anxious and careful about worldly things. It will induce us, in compliance with the admonition of our Saviour, to feel persuaded that he who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, will not neglect to take care of us.

And thus also, when visited with affliction, belief that he is our *Father*; and that he is *Almighty*, will prevent us from murmuring and repining, and induce us to submit with resignation and cheerfulness to whatever he layeth upon us. The Scriptures assure us, that as a father chasteneth his son, so the Lord our God chasteneth us¹; that it is good for us to be afflicted²; that he chasteneth us for our profit³. If we really believe, that whatever befalls us, happens by the direction or the permission of Him, by whom, as our Lord assures us, the hairs of our head are all numbered⁴, happens by the will of God the Father Almighty, we shall suffer with meek resignation. We shall be disposed to say

¹ Deut. viii. 5.² Psalm cxix. 71.³ Heb. xii. 10.⁴ Matt., x. 30.

from our hearts, “it is the Lord, let him do “what seemeth him good¹;” Lord, “not “my will but thine be done².” If instead of thus submitting, we give way to murmuring, and repining, and discontent, is there not reason to fear that we do not firmly believe in God’s providence? Do we not, in some degree, deny by our behaviour the God whom we profess to acknowledge?

The apostle says, “be careful for nothing; “but in every thing by prayer and supplica- “tion, with thanksgiving, let your requests “be made known unto God³.” And this naturally leads me to another observation, which is, that the Scriptures represent God as being a God who heareth prayer⁴: If we believe this representation, we shall consider prayer not only as a duty, but as a glorious privilege; we shall “continue instant in “prayer⁵,” and watch unto the same with all perseverance⁶; we shall pray constantly and fervently in private, and shall be regular in joining in the public prayers of the Church; shall be glad when they say unto us, “We “will go into the house of the Lord⁷.” If, on the other hand, you neglect to offer your supplications to the Most High, if you restrain prayer before God, you act decidedly in the

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 18.² Luke xxii. 42.³ Phil. iv. 6.⁴ Psalm lxxv. 2.⁵ Rom. xii. 12.⁶ Eph. vi. 18.⁷ Psalm cxxii. 1.

spirit of those¹ unbelievers, who say, “What is “the Almighty, that we should serve him, or “what profit should we have if we pray unto “him¹? And whether such a person can truly and consistently say, that he believes in God the Father Almighty, judge ye.

My friends, let us “take heed, lest there “be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in “departing from the living God²;” and let us also beware most anxiously, that while we profess that we know God, we do not deny him in our works³. Let me hope that you all really do believe in God the Father Almighty. Endeavour then yourselves, and pray to him to assist the endeavour, to preserve upon your minds a constant recollection of him, a constant sense of his presence. Endeavour, like David, to set the Lord always before you. Since “all things are naked “and opened to the eyes of him with whom “we have to do⁴,” and even the secrets of our hearts are not hidden from him, be very guarded and watchful in all your thoughts, words, and actions. Since he not only at first created but still preserves and provides for you, and disposes of you and yours according to his good pleasure, resign yourselves entirely to his will, and in all dispensations, however afflictive, try to say from your heart,

¹ Job xxi. 15.² Heb. iii. 12. • ³ Tit. i. 16.⁴ Heb. iv. 13.

Thy will be done. In short, if you really believe in God, that belief will naturally induce you to *fear* him ; and to *love* him as much as you possibly can, with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength ; it will lead you to *worship* him, to *give him thanks*, to *put your whole trust in him*, and to *call upon him* ; it will induce you to *honour his holy name and his word*, and to *serve him truly all the days of your life*.

That we may thus believe in God the Father Almighty, and that our belief may produce these salutary effects, may God of his mercy grant through Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N III.

BELIEF IN GOD THE SON.

COLOSSIANS i. 14.

“ In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

NEXT in importance to belief in God the Father, who made us and all the world, is belief in “ God the Son, who hath redeemed “us and all mankind.” It is from our profession of this article of faith that we have the name of *Christians*; and it is of the utmost consequence to us seriously to consider what we really mean when we make this profession, and to reflect whether our lives in this instance are answerable to the belief which we pretend to hold. You say then, that you believe “in God the Son, who redeemed you;” and often in the Church Service, and probably at other times also, speak of Christ, by the appellation of the Redeemer. What do you understand by the expression? The proper meaning of the word to *redeem* is to buy back. It is particularly used for setting free a prisoner or

captive, by paying a price for his release. Let us consider now in what sense Christ is said to have redeemed us.

The Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament constantly represent the natural state of man as a state of sin and death. It is necessary to dwell a little upon this point. As "they that are whole need not a physician¹," and they that think themselves well, will not have recourse to one, so we, unless we are sensible of our spiritual danger, shall not be induced to seek the means of safety; we shall not have recourse to the Redeemer, unless we feel that we stand in need of being redeemed.

The necessity of *redemption* arises from our being guilty of sin, and consequently exposed to the punishment of sin. If you ask, what sin is; St. John tells you, that "sin is "the transgression of the law²," the transgression of the holy and pure law of God. God having given us our being, has a just right to prescribe such laws as he sees fit, for the regulation of our actions, words, and thoughts. Such laws he has given us in the holy Scriptures, and the more we study and understand these laws, the more we shall be convinced, that the observance of them is most conducive to our own well-being and happiness. Whenever we transgress any of

¹ Matt. ix. 12.

² 1 John iii. 4.

these laws, either in thought, word, or deed, either by doing what we ought not to do, or by leaving undone what we ought to do, we are guilty of sin. The very inclination or desire to act contrary to the law of God, even when we do not give way to it, has, as the Article of our Church expresses it, “the nature of sin¹.” The word *sin*, consequently, means something more than what in common language is termed crime, or vice. These two words relate chiefly to actions or habits, which are hurtful to society or to ourselves as members of society; but *sin* includes whatever is contrary to the laws of God. A man may be in common repute free, not only from all crimes, but from all vices, and yet, in a religious point of view, be a great sinner; may in fact have to answer for sins more in number than the hairs of his head².

In order to come to the knowledge and proper sense of our sins, we must compare our lives with the rule of God’s commandments delivered from mount Sinai, and explained and spiritualized by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount; or with those other practical precepts which abound in every part of the Scriptures, especially in the New Testament. I do not mean to enter into a full account of these laws; I will, however, mention a few instances, which may assist in

¹ Art. ix.² Psalm xl. 15.

making us sensible, how far we fall short of the obedience which we ought to pay.

Our Saviour tells us then, that “the first and great commandment” is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind¹ :” that we must love him better than any thing else : and our own reason must acknowledge, that he deserves this love, and that we ought to feel it. Which of us now shall say that he has thoroughly kept this first, this great commandment? One of the most important duties to God is prayer : but how apt are we to neglect prayer ! and, when we attempt to pray, how apt are our thoughts to wander to the world and the flesh, thus exposing us to the charge of drawing near to God with our lips, while our hearts are far from him² ! It would not be too much to assert, that there is not one of the duties which we peculiarly owe to God, which we perfectly fulfil.

Many of those, who cannot but acknowledge that they are wanting in love to God, pride themselves upon their observance of their duty towards their neighbour. With how little reason they thus flatter themselves, a moment’s reflection will convince them. The foundation of the duties which relate to man is this, “Thou shalt love thy

¹ Matt. xxii. 37, 38. •

² Matt. xv. 8.

“neighbour as thyself.” This is styled by our Lord the second great commandment of the law; and the apostle tells us, that, “he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law¹.” By the word neighbour, we understand every man, to whom we have the means of doing good or harm; indeed every man without exception. But which of us can truly say, that he feels, if not the same *degree*, yet the same *kind* of love for his neighbour that he does for himself? that he is in the same manner desirous of promoting his welfare, in the same manner attentive to his interest, and to the preservation of his character? But if sin is the transgression of the law, are we not *sinner*s if we transgress both the first and the second great commandment of that law?

One of the ways in which we are to show that we love our neighbour as ourself, is by doing as we would be done by. All men, both Christian and heathen, agree in admiring and extolling the excellence of this golden rule. But which of us perfectly acts up to it?

If from the foundation of the laws of the second table, we proceed to consider some of the particular commandments which it contains, we shall perhaps find equal reason for acknowledging our sinfulness. We have not,

¹ Rom^s xiii. 8.

I trust, any of us, committed direct murder : but you know from St. John, that he that “hateth his brother is a murderer¹ :” and our Lord assures us, that the sixth commandment is broken, by causeless or excessive anger, or by bearing malice in our bosoms². With respect to the seventh commandment, we know that the sins of adultery and fornication will shut out those who are guilty of them from the kingdom of heaven. But supposing that we are not chargeable with these deadly sins ; yet, are we pure from what our Saviour terms the adultery of the heart³ ? Are our actions, our looks, our dress, our words, and thoughts, governed by the laws of holy chastity ? So again we have not been guilty it may be of *stealing* ; we have never taken any thing belonging to another. But have we been strictly true and just in all our dealings ? Have we never put a neighbour to loss or inconvenience by incurring debts, which we were unable to pay ? Have we never in any bargain, or other transaction, leant unfairly to our own interest ? If we have not actually borne false witness against our neighbour in a court of justice, yet, have we never been guilty of slander or evil speaking ? Or have we never given utterance to evil surmises and insinuations to his disadvantage ? So again ; have we never

¹ John iii. 15.² Matt. v. 22.³ Matt. v. 28.

coveted or desired any thing belonging to another, and have we, on the contrary, been always contented, always patient and resigned in that station of life, and in those circumstances, in which the providence of God has placed us? If in this manner we examine ourselves by the holy and spiritual law of God, if we thus search and try our ways fairly and impartially, we shall find too much reason to confess, that in “many things “we offend all¹ ;” that “there is no man “that sinneth not² ;” that “if we say that “we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and “the truth is not in us³.” We accordingly *do* confess this in the Church Service. We all acknowledge, that we have offended against God’s holy laws; that we have left undone those things which we ought to have done; that we have done those things which we ought not to have done; that there is no health in us; that we are miserable offenders. Similar acknowledgments are made in other parts of the Liturgy: and the Scripture hath concluded all men under sin, and represents all the world as guilty before God⁴.

But God has a right to, and his law enjoins, perfect unerring obedience. Every transgression of that law is disobedience to the authority of the law-giver, and exposes

¹ James iii. 2.² 1 Kings viii. 46.³ 1 John i. 8.⁴ Rom. iii. 19.

us to the penalty of disobedience. The “wages of sin is death¹ ;” “the soul that sinneth, it shall die².” “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them³.” “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men⁴.” How shall we escape this wrath of God, this curse of the law?—By repentance and amendment of life? But why should we think that repentance alone will be sufficient? A man does not pay off the debts which he has contracted in time past, by resolving not to incur fresh debts for the time to come. A person who has been guilty of murder or some other heinous crime is not cleared by the goodness of his life afterwards; but, by the laws of the land, is at any time liable to be punished for his offence. And each of our manifold transgressions of the divine law renders us guilty in the sight of God, and consequently liable to punishment. How then shall we be delivered from this state of guilt and liability to punishment? Shall we look round for help to any fellow mortal? Alas; “no man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him. It costs more, (much more), to redeem *their*

¹ Rom. vi. 23.² Ezek. xviii. 4.³ Gal. iii. 10.⁴ Rom. j. 18.

souls¹." Neither could any of the angels effect our deliverance, for even they are not pure in the sight of God, but are charged by him with folly².

But, when we could do nothing for ourselves, and were without hope from any other quarter, "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It pleased the eternal Son of God himself to redeem us, and for this purpose to take our nature upon him, to endure a life of distress and suffering, and at length, since "without shedding of blood is no remission³," to undergo a shameful and agonizing death upon the cross. Inasmuch as he was man, he made expiation for the sins of men in the very nature that sinned; and inasmuch as he was God, the sacrifice, the expiation which he offered, was infinite in value, and sufficient for the guilt of the whole world.

This sacrifice of the death of Christ is the leading subject of the holy Scriptures, from one end of them to the other. It was in effect promised to Adam immediately after the fall; was represented by the animal sacrifices of the patriarchal ages and of the Mosaic dispensation; and was foretold, still with increasing distinctness as the time of its accomplishment drew near, by the holy Prophets. The prophecy of Isaiah in his 53d chapter is particularly remarkable. . " Surely

¹ Psalm xlix. 7, 8. ² Job iv. 18. ³ Heb. ix. 22.

“ he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all—He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter—for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” Our blessed Lord himself tells us, that “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life¹.” He speaks of his own blood as being “ shed for many, for the remission of sins²,” and of his flesh being given “ for the life of the world³.” The discourses and writings of his chosen followers are full of passages to the same purport. “ Christ hath loved us,” says St. Paul, “ and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour⁴.” Again, “ Christ our pass-over⁵—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;” “ the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world⁶,” is

¹ John iii. 16.² Matt. xxvi. 28.³ John vi. 51.⁴ Ephes. v. 2.⁵ 1 Cor. v. 7.⁶ John i. 29.

sacrificed for us. He who knew no sin, was made sin, or a sin offering for us, “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him¹.” “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us² ;” that he might reconcile us to God by the cross³. He “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood⁴.” He “gave himself a ransom for all⁵.” He hath redeemed us to God by his blood⁶ : for we “were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ,—who was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world⁷.” Both in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in that to the Colossians, St. Paul says, in nearly the same words, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins⁸.”

In the latter of these Epistles the apostle reminds us, that he who shed his blood to procure the forgiveness of our sins, was he who “is the image of the invisible God ; he” by whom “were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible ;” that all things were created by him and for him : and he is before all things, “and by him all things consist⁹.”

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.² Gal. iii. 13.³ Ephes. ii. 16.⁴ Rev. 1. 5.⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 6.• ⁶ Rev. v. 9.⁷ 1 Pet. i. 18—20.⁸ Col. i. 14.⁹ Col. i. 15—17.

This is the great and glorious Being, who for us men and for our salvation—for the forgiveness of our sins—submitted to be buffeted, and scourged, and spit upon, to be treated as the lowest malefactor, and at length to undergo death, even the death of the cross; who submitted to be fixed to the accursed tree, by nails driven through his hands and feet, and thus to expire in torment.

And now let us seriously and honestly ask ourselves, my friends, whether we really believe these things? Whether we are thoroughly persuaded in our hearts, that when we were in a lost and ruined state, the eternal Son of God died upon the cross to save us? Do we, I say, really believe this? If we do *not* believe it, we are yet in our sins, are yet in a state of condemnation. It is generally true, that “without faith it is impossible to please God¹”; and with respect to this great doctrine in particular, it is most certainly true, that the death of Christ will not profit those who refuse to believe in it when it is preached to them. Christ by the shedding of his blood has purchased salvation; but the mean by which it is applied to our own souls, as we are taught by the Scriptures, and from the authority of the Scriptures by our Church², is *faith*. In other

¹ Heb. xi. 6.

² See Art. xi. and the Homily.

words, it is by faith, by a firm belief in these truths—a belief which disposes us to keep God's commandments, that our souls reap the benefit of Christ's death upon the cross. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life¹." And toward the conclusion of his Gospel, St. John says these things "are written, that ye might *believe* that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that *believing* ye might have life through his name²." St. Paul teaches us, that with "the heart man *believeth* unto righteousness³;" and when asked by the gaoler at-Philippi, what he must do to be saved, his reply was, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved⁴."

But though faith in the death of Christ is thus necessary, we must bear in mind that a faith which does not produce good works is dead and worthless⁵. Let us return then to the question before asked; do we indeed and really believe that the glorious Son of God died upon the cross for our sins? If we do believe it, surely we must be sensible that sin is something awfully serious, since it required so tremendous a sacrifice. And shall we continue any longer in sin? Certainly, if

¹ John iii. 15.² John xx. 31.³ Rom. x. 10.⁴ Acts xvi. 31.⁵ James ii. 17.

“ as the malignity of sin is so great, the
“ danger of a life of wilful sin must be much
“ more formidable than imagination is apt to
“ paint it. The weight of punishment natu-
“ rally due to sin must bear some proportion
“ to its intrinsic malignity, and to the extent
“ of the mischiefs which arise from it. The
“ punishment must also bear some just pro-
“ portion to the price which has been paid
“ for our redemption. Terrible must have
“ been the punishment, which was bought off
“ at so great a price as the blood of the Son of
“ God ; and terrible must be the punishment
“ which still awaits us, if we account the blood
“ of the covenant an unholy thing, and forfeit
“ the benefit of that atonement.”

Consider, my friends, that you are not your own masters. Being redeemed, being bought with the precious blood of Christ, you belong to, you are the property of, him who has thus wonderfully bought you. “ Ye
“ are not your own,” says the Apostle, “ for
“ ye are bought with a price¹ ;” do not then dishonestly deprive Christ of what he has so dearly purchased. • Do not live—you have no right to live—according to your own corrupt wills and appetites, but according to the will of him who has bought you. Strive in all things to “ glorify God in your body, and in
“ your spirit, which are God’s².” “ Remem-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.² 1 Cor. vi. 20.

“ber that Christ hath once suffered for sins, “the just for the unjust:” and why? “that “he might bring us to God¹.” Remember, “that he died for all, that they which live “should not henceforth live unto themselves, “but unto him that died for them².”

, Allow me yet once again to ask you, do you really believe the great truths which have formed the subject of this discourse? Are you really and thoroughly persuaded that the eternal Son of God died upon the cross to save you from everlasting death? And do you not feel thankful to him? But if you feel thankful, deeply and heartily thankful, as I hope you do, endeavour to show your thankfulness not with your lips only, but in your lives, by giving up yourselves to God’s service, and by walking before him in holiness and righteousness all your days. Pray earnestly to God so to impress these things upon your heart, that they may induce you to lead a holy and religious life, that they may be the means of making you what Christ’s death was intended to make you, “a peculiar people, zealous of good “works.”

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

² 2 Cor. v. 15.

SERMON IV.

ON A FUTURE JUDGMENT.

2 COR. v. 10.

“We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

OUR blessed Lord, having finished on earth the work which his Father gave him to do; having by his death made atonement for our sins, and opened unto us the gates of everlasting life by his glorious resurrection; in the sight of many of his chosen followers ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, and there SITTETH AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. He will not, however, always continue there. The Scriptures repeatedly assure us that he will come again from heaven, and that the objects of his coming will be to judge the world. “God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he

“hath raised him from the dead¹.” Accordingly in the Creed, after professing our belief, that our Lord ON THE THIRD DAY ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD, AND ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN, we say, FROM THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD.

The doctrine of a future judgment is so calculated to produce holiness of living, that I wish to direct to it your serious attention. In discoursing on this awful subject, we will consider, First, some of the circumstances of solemnity which will attend the last judgment; Secondly, what we shall be judged for; and, Thirdly, the consequences of the sentence that will be pronounced.

I. Some belief in a future judgment appears to have prevailed pretty generally among men, even before the coming of our Lord; and still I believe prevails among nations, on whom the light of the Gospel has not yet shined, or, where if it ever shone, it has again been put out in obscure darkness. This belief may have been handed down by unbroken tradition from the time of Noah, or may perhaps have been discovered by the native workings of the mind of man and the suggestions of human reason. Wherever there exists any idea of the difference between right and wrong, and at the same time any belief in a God, in a wise and just su-

¹ Acts i:vii. 31.

preme Ruler of the world, it was perhaps natural for those who held such belief to conclude, that he would make a distinction between those who acted well, and those who acted ill; that he would punish the one and reward the other. And since they could not but perceive that this distinction was oftentimes not made in this life; that *here* the comparatively good were sometimes reduced to a state of affliction and suffering, while the wicked and ungodly were in seeming prosperity; it was perhaps natural for them to conclude farther, that there would be a future state, in which this distinction would be made, that there would be a future judgment which would assign to each man his condition according as his conduct in this life had been good or evil. It may have been natural to conclude thus much from the faint records of tradition, or from the weak exertions of unassisted human reason. Whether that reason would of itself have been able to discover this great truth, it is not necessary for us to inquire; for we are no longer left to such feeble guides but are assured of the certainty of a last judgment by the constant tenor and clear revelation of the holy Scriptures. They assure us, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness¹;" when he "will

¹ Acts xvii. 31.

“bring every work into judgment and every
 “secret thing, whether it be good, or whe-
 “ther it be evil¹.” They tell us that a day
 is coming, when the dead, small and great,
 shall stand before God²; when the sea shall
 give up the dead that were in it, and death
 and hell (the place of departed spirits) shall
 give up the dead that were in them, and
 they shall be judged every man according to
 his works. They tell us “that we must all
 “appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,
 “that every one may receive the things done
 “in his body, according to that he hath done,
 “whether it be good or bad³.” A multitude
 of other passages assert or allude to the same
 awful event: and many set forth in most
 expressive terms some of the tremendous
 circumstances with which this event will be
 accompanied. Our Saviour tells us in St.
 Matthew, that “the Son of man shall come
 “in the glory of his Father with his angels⁴ ;”
 and in St. Luke, that “the Son of man shall
 “come in his own glory, and in his Father’s,
 “and of the holy angels⁵.” St. Paul informs
 us, that “the Lord Jesus shall be revealed
 “from heaven with his mighty angels, in
 “flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that
 know not God, and that obey not the Gos-
 “pel of our Lord Jesus Christ⁶.” And again,

¹ Eccl. xii. 14. ² Rev. xx. 12, 13. ³ 2 Cor. v. 10.

⁴ Matt. xvi. 27. ⁵ Luke ix. 26. ⁶ 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

“ The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God,” which shall awaken the dead, and raise them out of their graves ; “ but the dead in Christ shall rise first¹.” And in the book of Revelation, St. John, in the spirit of prophecy, represents himself as having actually seen this awful spectacle. “ And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened ; and another book was opened ; which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works².”

The Scriptures, you will recollect, repeatedly tell us that this event will be accompanied by the destruction of the world, which we now see, and that the instrument, by which this destruction will be accomplished, is fire. We are told, for instance, by St. Peter, “ that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burned up³.”

My friends, let me here pause while I beg you to reflect, that these are not descriptions

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 16. ² Rev. xxii. 12. ³ 2 Pet. iii. 10.

of an event in which we have no concern, and which we may hear and read of without interest. We shall all of us be called upon to witness the tremendous scene. You, and I, and all shall actually witness the destruction of the universe; we shall actually see this earth, with all the works of nature, and of art upon it, its cities, its forests, and its mountains, devoured by the flames, and passing away into nothing. And there is not one among us, whatever his state or condition may be, whether small or great, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, wicked or holy, but must appear before this awful tribunal. And yet we can most of us hear of these things without being affected; or, if we are affected for a time, the impression soon passes away, and our hearts are again given up to this world, as if it were our only portion, our only rest. One reason of this indifference is to be found in 'our want of reflection upon the nature and judgment to which we shall then be subjected; upon the strict justice, I had almost said the *severity*, with which it will be conducted. Let us proceed therefore, in the next place, to consider what we shall be judged for.

II. We shall be judged, the text tells us, for the things done in the body; for our behaviour during our continuance on earth; for our actions, words, and thoughts, which, as you have heard, are represented as being

recorded in the book of God, that at the last day we may be judged out of those things which are written in the book.

We shall be called to account for our *actions*. Not only will the more daring violations of God's law then be remembered, but also those deeds of darkness, which the hopes of concealment encouraged us to commit, of which we said, no eye shall see us; forgetting that nothing can be concealed from God, that "all things are naked, and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do¹," and, that the time would come when he would set our misdeeds before him, and our secret sins in the light of his countenance². Every unlawful indulgence of appetite, of which we said in our heart the darkness shall cover it; every secret fraud, and act of deceit, in which we perhaps exulted as an instance of skill and sagacity, and took advantage of the simplicity or credulity of a neighbour; these, and all such as these, shall then be openly published before men and angels; "for, there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known³." Particularly, if at any time the desire of the applause of men, or the dread of their censure, the fear of their reproaches or laughter, have led us to act contrary to our known duty, our cowardice

¹ Heb. iv. 13.² Psalm xc. 8.³ Luke xii. 2.

and shame shall then be openly exposed ; for, “ whosoever,” says our Lord, “ shall be “ ashamed of me and of my words, in this “ adulterous and sinful generation ; of him “ shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he “ cometh in the glory of his Father with the “ holy angels ¹.” And not only those actions, which were evidently sinful, but many of those which to outward appearance were good and praiseworthy, will be condemned, when the motives from which they proceeded are revealed. Alms bestowed, and acts of seeming kindness performed, not from a principle of love or obedience to God or from good-will to man, but from a spirit of ostentation ; regularity in the external ordinances of religion proceeding, not from devotion and a sense of duty, but from the desire of human applause, will by that God, who seeth the heart, be found wanting in goodness, and condemned with the rest of the offspring of vanity and pride.

We shall be judged also for our words, “ By thy words thou shalt be justified, and “ by thy words thou shalt be condemned ².” Those, for instance, who have accustomed themselves to the language of cursing, who have been in the habit of calling upon God to *damn* their neighbours or themselves, perhaps even their own children, and have died

¹ Mark viii. 38.

² Matt. xii. 37.

without repentance, will then learn by sad experience how dreadful a thing that damnation is, which they so wantonly called down. As while in the body¹ they delighted in cursing, they have cause to fear that cursing will happen unto them, and that they will hear the terrible sentence of “Depart, ye “cursed, into everlasting fire.” Those, whose tongues have sown strife and dissension; those, who have slandered their neighbours, or who have rejoiced in an opportunity of publishing their sins and imperfections by evil-speaking; those, who have allowed themselves to vent their anger in railing and abusive language; those also, whose conversation has been the conversation of lasciviousness, who have been guilty of “foolish “talking and jesting,” designed to excite unchaste imaginations and desires; all these will then have cause to deplore their folly; for, of “every idle word²,” or, as it has been understood, of every vain and wicked word, “that men shall speak,” says our Saviour, “they shall give account in the day of judgment.”

We shall be judged too for our thoughts. Our thoughts are oftentimes not entirely in our own power; and many vain and foolish, or even in themselves sinful, imaginations, may enter our minds against our wills.

¹ Psalm cix. 16.² Matt. xii. 36.

These, inasmuch as they arise without our consent, will not, we trust, be imputed to us, by a God of mercy, as actual sins. But, every wilful deliberate wicked thought ; every scheme of iniquity, which we have devised, without being able to practise it ; every fraud or stratagem for over-reaching another which we have planned, though without being able to carry it into effect ; every actual intention to gratify some sinful lust, to the accomplishment of which nothing but opportunity has been wanting ; nay, farther, every unchaste imagination, every uncharitable thought which we have wilfully cherished in secret, will by that God, who spieth out all the thoughts and purposes of the heart, be classed with actual sins.

And not only will our sins of commission, those in which we have done that which we ought not to have done, be remembered against us, but our sins of omission also, the leaving undone what we ought to do, are recorded in the book of God's remembrance. Indeed it is upon the performance or the non-performance of *duties*, particularly of the duties of brotherly kindness, that our Saviour represents the last sentence to depend. We shall have to account for every instance in which we have perversely withholden good from our brother to whom it was due, when it was in the power of our hand to do it ; for every neglect of a reasonable opportunity of

promoting his worldly comfort, or his eternal welfare. We shall have to answer for every occasion of advancing the glory of God among men, which we have carelessly omitted to improve; and for our wilful neglect of the means of grace, such as reading and hearing the word of God, such as prayer and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

III. It remains, in the third place, that we say a few words on the sentence that will be pronounced. What this will be, we are told by our Lord himself. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.—And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal¹." As the blessedness of the righteous, so also the punishment of the wicked will last for ever. What the exact nature of this punishment will be, we perhaps do not know; and in speaking of it, I will not venture to say any thing but what is said in Scripture. St. John in the Revelations describes the place of punishment as being a "lake of fire²."

¹ Math. xxv. 34, 40. 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Rev. xxi. 15.

Our blessed Lord represents it by “outer darkness,” “where is” “weeping and gnashing of teeth¹,” and with a most awful and impressive repetition, three times in one chapter, speaks of it as a place in which “their worm dieth not, and the fire never shall be quenched².”

In one of these states, my friends, will every one of us be fixed, by the judgment of the last day. That sentence will place each of us in a state of unspeakable blessedness which will last for ever, or in a state of misery and despair which will never have an end.

If we really believe these things; if we really believe that our Lord, who is now at the right hand of God, will from thence “come to judge both the quick and the dead,” would it not be wise in us to prepare for the last judgment, while we yet have time? Is it wise in us ever to be unmindful of the awful account which we must one day give? We, the ministers of the Gospel, remind you of these solemn truths, not for the sake of exciting an useless alarm, but in order to save you from the sentence of condemnation. “Knowing the terror of the Lord we” try to “persuade men³,” to repent of and

¹ Matt. viii. 12, &c.

² Mark ix. 44. 46. 48.

³ 2 Cor. v. 11.

forsake their sins, and seek for pardon through the merits of our Redeemer. Judge therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord. If we would “not be condemned in that fearful judgment, we must accuse and condemn ourselves for our own faults” now, and strive, through the aid of the Holy Spirit, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, even the fruit of a holy and religious life. And let us remember for our encouragement, that the Being who will then come in great glory to judge the world, is he who once came in great humility to save the world. Our judge is one who took our nature upon him, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been in all points tempted like as we are¹, and who died to save us from condemnation. Although we have sinned, “yet we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous².” If we will but repent and believe, our Judge himself becomes our Advocate. “Let us therefore return unto him, who is the merciful receiver of all true penitent sinners; assuring ourselves that he is ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us, if we come unto him with faithful repentance; if we submit ourselves to him, and from henceforth walk in his ways;

¹ Heb. iv. 15.² 1 John ii. 1.

“ if we will take his easy yoke and light
“ burden upon us, to follow him in lowliness,
“ patience, and charity, and be ordered by
“ the governance of his Holy Spirit ; seeking
“ always his glory, and serving him duly in
“ our vocation with thanksgiving ¹ .”

¹ Commination.

SERMON V.

BELIEF IN GOD THE HOLY GHOST.

2 COR. xiii. 14.

“ The Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.”

IN his affectionate farewell to the Church at Corinth, St. Paul expresses his wish or prayer that the “ communion of the Holy Ghost might be with them all.” He could have expressed for them no kinder wish; and it accordingly has been adopted as the conclusion of our ordinary Church service, and of most of our forms of domestic devotion. The communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost, in other words, the being continually assisted by him, is of absolute necessity to the salvation of our souls. “ If any man have not the spirit of Christ,” says St. Paul; “ he is none of his¹,” and those who belong not to Christ, must be left to perish in outer darkness.

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

Important, however, as this doctrine is, it has not, I fear, its due influence in the world. Some men seem disposed to consider all reliance upon the aid of the Holy Ghost as a species of enthusiasm; and others treat it with such total neglect, that if they should be asked, like the imperfect converts at Ephesus, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed¹?" they would reply like them, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." The Apostle immediately rejoins, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" All persons baptized according to Christ's institution, are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as in the name of the Father and the Son. The Church of England, very properly, teaches us to consider belief in GOD THE HOLY GHOST, WHO SANCTIFIETH US, AND ALL THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD, as one of the chief articles of faith; she implores his aid in numerous passages in her public services, and concludes almost every psalm and hymn in these services, with ascribing glory to the Holy Ghost, as well as to the other two persons of the blessed Trinity.

"In discoursing on the fellowship or assistance of the Holy Ghost, I shall, First, shortly state the necessity we all lie under of receiving his aid: shall, Secondly, point out the

¹ Act xix. 2.

proper fruits or effects of his fellowship, by which effects we may judge how far we have received it; and shall, Thirdly, direct you to the most effectual means of procuring such assistance.

First, then, the assistance of the Holy Spirit is necessary, in consequence of the weakness and corruption of our nature. The Scriptures both of the Old and of the New Testament, represent the natural state of man as being a state of moral infirmity and sin. In the first age of the world we read of the generation then living, that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth,” and “that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;” that “all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth¹.” Whence did this general prevalence of wickedness proceed, but from an innate tendency and disposition to evil? David laments of himself, that he was conceived in sin and shapen in wickedness², and represents the Almighty as looking down “from heaven upon the children of men;” “to see if there was any that would understand and seek after God; but,” he proceeds, “they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” The wise son and successor of

¹ Gen. vi. 5. 12.

² Psalm li. 5. and xiv. 3, 4.

David in like manner asserts, “that there is
 “not a just man upon earth who doeth good,
 “and sinneth not¹ ;” that “the heart of the
 “sons of men is full of evil, and madness is
 “in their heart while they live² :” and Isaiah,
 in the name of mankind confesses, “all we
 “like sheep have gone astray: we have turned
 “every one to his own way³ .”

Whatever allowance may be made in some of these passages for the strong manner of expression common among the nations of the east, they certainly imply a great degree of depravity and corruption. The New Testament speaks the same language. Both our Lord himself, and his apostle St. Paul express the natural state of man by the terms “the flesh,” and “the old man;” and again and again assure us, that “they that are in the
 “flesh,” in that natural state, “cannot please
 “God⁴ .” Our Saviour speaks of men as loving darkness rather than light, because
 “their deeds were evil⁵ .” And St. Paul, having adopted the acknowledgments of the sinfulness of man, made by the Psalmist and by Isaiah, says, “the Scripture hath con-
 “cluded all under sin⁶ .” He addresses the Ephesians as having been “dead in trespasses and sins, wherein” says he, “in time

¹ Eccles. vii. 20.

² Isaiah liii. 6.

³ John iii. 19.

⁴ Eccles. ix. 3.

⁵ Rom. viii. 8.

⁶ Rom. iii. and Gal iii. 22.

“~~past~~ ye walked according to the course of
“ this world, according to the prince of the
“ power of the air, the spirit that now work-
“ eth in the children of disobedience: among
“ whom also we all had our conversation in
“ time past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling
“ the desires of the flesh and of the mind;
“ and were by nature the children of wrath,
“ even as others¹.” And in that well-known
passage in the Epistle to the Romans, speak-
ing in the person of a man still under the in-
fluence of his native corruption, he says, “ I
“ am carnal, sold under sin. For that which
“ I do, I allow not: for what I would, that
“ do I not; but what I hate, that do I.” And
again, “ for I know that in me, (that is, in my
“ flesh), dwelleth no good thing: for to will
“ is present with me; but how to perform
“ that which is good, I find not².”

The histories both of ancient and of modern times; indeed, the daily and weekly records of passing events, tend to confirm these Scriptural representations of the sinfulness of man, since a great part of these records is made up of the recital of human weaknesses and human crimes. Our observation—unwilling observation—of what passes under our own eyes, bears painful testimony to the same truth. Indeed, for the confirmation of it, we need only appeal to what passes in our

¹ Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3.

² Rom. vii. 14, 15, 18,

own bosoms. For which of us does not often feel a backwardness to what we know to be our duty, and a strong inclination to many things which we know to be evil? How unguarded are we sometimes, both in our words and in our actions; and how many emotions of vanity, of undue desire, of causeless anger, and of ill-will, arise in our bosoms. In particular how indisposed are we often for prayer, and for the other offices of devotion!

It is true, that a man may, without the aid of the Holy Spirit, maintain a generally moral line of conduct, and a fair reputation among men. He may be led to do this by regard for his own character, for his own interest, his own health, his own ease, and by a variety of other human motives and human feelings; but without that aid he cannot become really religious, he cannot become HOLY; and we know, that without holiness "no man shall see the Lord¹." "He cannot," as our Article expresses it, "turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God²;" or do works well-pleasing in his sight, well-pleasing as proceeding from a pure principle of religion. As long as a man is destitute of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, he is in his natural state, in that state which the Scrip-

¹ Heb. xii. 14. ² Article x. See that Article and the ninth.

tures term the flesh, and “ they that are in
“ the flesh cannot please God ; if ye live after
“ the flesh ye shall die ¹ ;” “ shall of the flesh
“ reap corruption ² .”

Hence then arises the necessity of our receiving the help of the Holy Ghost. Hence it was that our Saviour said, “ Except a man
“ be born again—born of water and of the
“ Spirit—he cannot enter into the kingdom
“ of God ³ .” Hence it was, that St. Paul so repeatedly exhorts his converts to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and “ to put on
“ the new man, which after God is created in
“ righteousness and true holiness ⁴ .”

In strict agreement with this doctrine of Scripture are the prayers of our Church. In them we acknowledge “ that such is the
“ frailty of man, that without God we cannot
“ but fall ;” that, “ through the weakness of
“ our mortal nature we can do no good thing
“ without God :” that, “ if we have good de-
“ sires in our hearts, or think those things
“ that are good,” they are put into our minds by the preventing grace of God, that is, by the grace of God *going before* our thoughts to purify and guide them.* We pray in one Collect that “ we may be daily renewed by
“ God’s Holy Spirit ;” in another, “ that by
“ the same Spirit we may have a right judg-

¹ Rom. viii. 8, 13. ² Gal. vi. 8. • ³ John iii. 3, 5.

⁴ Ephes. iv. 23, 24.

“ment in all things;” and in another we say, “forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.”

The Communion Service, and the occasional offices, particularly those for Baptism, are full of expressions to the same purport.

Weak and frail as we are in ourselves, and encompassed as we are with moral and spiritual dangers, yet, God’s grace is sufficient for us¹, and his strength is made perfect in our weakness. “The Spirit still helpeth our infirmities²,” and we may be able to do all things through Christ strengthening us³.

From the beginning of time, the Holy Spirit, we doubt not, was ready to help those who sought his aid; but under the Gospel dispensation his influences were to be more plentifully poured forth. “A new heart will I give you,” saith the Lord, “and a new spirit will I put within you.” “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them⁴.” And again, “the Spirit,” shall “be poured upon us from on high,—and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever⁵.”

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 9. ² Rom. viii. 26. ³ Phil. iv. 13.
⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. ⁵ Isaiah xxxii. 13, 17.

Our Lord, just before his death, in one of his last affectionate discourses to his disciples, says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you¹." Accordingly St. Paul speaks of the bodies of Christians as being the temple of the Holy Ghost.

II. We will now, in the second place, proceed to inquire into the proper fruits of the Spirit, into the effects which follow from our partaking of his fellowship or communion.

And first, we are repeatedly assured by St. Paul, that if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. What the works of the flesh are, you well know. Some of them are enumerated by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians. "The works of the flesh," says he, "are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like²."

To be guilty of any of these works of the flesh, shows, that we are not wholly led by

¹ John xiv. 16, 17. See also chapters xv. and xvi.

² Gal. v. 19, 20, 21.

the Spirit. All the sins of unchastity appear to be peculiarly repugnant to the influence of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul argues against them on this very ground. “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God¹?” and “if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy².” Drunkenness also St. Paul appears to place in particular opposition to the influence of the Spirit: and certainly this may well be said of a sin, which besots even a man’s natural reason and conscience, and deprives him of the common knowledge of right and wrong. If, my friends, you are in the habit of giving way to any of these lusts of the flesh: to drunkenness, for instance, or unchastity, or hatred, or a quarrelsome disposition, you may be sure that you are not duly led by the Spirit, and are therefore far from the kingdom of God.

Among the positive effects of the communion of the Holy Ghost, one of the first that I shall mention is, a sincere practical belief in the Christian dispensation, especially in that main branch of it, the redemption of the world by the death of Christ. True Christ-

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19.

² 1 Cor. iii. 17.

ian faith is the offspring of a divine influence. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but "by the Holy Ghost¹;" and whosoever confesseth from his heart that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is born of God².

A leading feature in the character of those who are led by the Spirit of God, is frequency and earnestness in prayer. In one of the prophetic promises of the Spirit it is said, "I will pour upon the house of David, "and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the "Spirit of grace and of supplications³;" and the Spirit is represented by St. Paul, as assisting us in prayer, as making "intercession "for us⁴." If we pray not at all, or but seldom, and then without earnestness or fervency, we have great cause to fear that we are very imperfectly influenced by the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord assures us* that the love of God is the first and great commandment of all. This love of God, however, finds little place in our corrupted nature; until, as the Apostle speaks, it "is shed abroad in our hearts by "the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us⁵."

In the passage of the Epistle to the Galatians before referred to, St. Paul says, "the "fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meek-

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 3. ² 1 John iv. 2. ³ Zech. xii. 10.

⁴ Rom. viii. 26. ⁵ Rom. v. 5.

“ness, temperance¹.” He whose heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit, will be influenced by *love* to God; and by real good-will to man, which he will show in all the acts and offices of Christian charity, as opportunity is offered to him. The other fruits of the Spirit here mentioned are *joy*, a religious cheerfulness, springing from an humble trust in God’s mercy through Christ; and *peace*, peace of conscience produced by the same cause, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, together with a peaceable disposition and behaviour towards men, and a wish to promote peace by all proper means. *Long-suffering*, *gentleness*, and *meekness*, are again and again recommended and enforced by the Apostles and by their divine Master, as distinguishing marks of being influenced by the Spirit; and we are repeatedly charged to “put away from us all bitterness, and “wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice²,” as sins which are contrary to his suggestions. *Faith*, in the passage above quoted, appears to mean, not so much faith in God, as faithfulness, or good faith in our intercourse with man; a strict regard for truth in all we say or do, the being true and just in all our dealings. And certainly, we shall not be otherwise than true and just if we are guided by the Spirit of

¹ Gal. v. 22, 23.² Ephes. iv. 31.

truth. *Temperance* implies self-command and moderation in all things. It implies not only the curbing of the appetites and desires of the body, but the keeping within due bounds all earthly passions and feelings of every description.

There are many other passages in the Epistles, particularly in those to the Ephesians and the Colossians¹, which give the distinguishing marks of the old and of the new man; that is, of a man under the government of his evil nature, and of him who is led by the Holy Spirit. By attentive consideration of these passages, you may be assisted in judging for yourselves, whether you are, or are not, led by the Spirit of God.

Let us, my friends, guided and assisted by these passages of Scripture, fairly and honestly ask ourselves, how far we have got the better of the lusts of the flesh, and how far we show forth in our tempers and conduct the fruits of the Spirit.

Perhaps, upon such examination, we shall find that we are far from being habitually led by the Spirit of God, and that, therefore, we have little reason to consider ourselves as his children. And this leads me, in the last place, to direct you to the means of procuring the influences—the fellowship—of the Holy Ghost.

¹ See the three last chapters of each of these Epistles.

Since the Holy Spirit is the spirit of knowledge, you must seek the knowledge of him, and of the effects which he produces on the heart, in those Scriptures which were “given by his inspiration,” which holy men of “God wrote as they were moved by the “Holy Ghost.” If able, you should diligently read them; but, at all events, should attentively hear them, should mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.

Prayer, however, is the great means for obtaining the aid of the Divine Spirit; but our supplications must be frequent and earnest, in proportion to the importance, the absolute need in which we stand, of the blessing which we ask. Petitions uttered only with the lips, without any corresponding emotions of the heart, deserve not the name of prayer. Our prayers for the help of the Holy Spirit must be constant, fervent, importunate; and if we thus pray we shall be graciously heard. “Ask, and it shall be “given you¹,” says our Saviour; “seek, and “ye shall find;” and he encourages us to hope that our heavenly Father will give “the “Holy Spirit to them that ask him².”

Another powerful means of procuring the assistance of the Spirit of God, is furnished by the holy Sacraments. To the sacrament of Baptism we were admitted in our infancy;

¹ Matt. vii. 7.

² Luke ix. 16.

but when arrived at mature years, we should look back to it with serious reflection upon the privileges to which we were then admitted, and the solemn engagements into which we entered. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was appointed expressly for "the strengthening and refreshing of our souls." To that we ought regularly to have recourse, for fresh supplies of those influences of the Divine Spirit, which are essential to our spiritual life here, and to our life in heaven hereafter.

My friends, I hope that you have paid attention to the doctrine which I have endeavoured to place before you. You all profess, as one of the main articles of your faith, to believe in GOD THE HOLY GHOST, WHO SANCTIFIETH YOU, AND ALL THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD. Who sanctifieth you? But are you sanctified by him? The word sanctified, you know, means to make holy. Are you made holy? Are you attentive to all your duties to God and man, and governed by religious principles in all you do or say? In baptism you were made the children of God¹. But remember, that in order to be numbered among the children of God, it is necessary that you be led by the Spirit of God. And are you led by that Spirit? You trust that you are members of, that you belong to,

¹ Church Catechism.

72 *Belief in God the Holy Ghost.*

Christ. You are not, to any profitable or saving purpose his members, unless you are influenced by his Spirit¹.

Seriously lay these things to heart. Seek in earnest prayer for fresh supplies of the aid of the Spirit; and may God of his mercy grant, that the communion or fellowship of the Holy Ghost may be with us all evermore.

¹ Rom. viii. 9.

SERMON VI.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN v. 39.

“Search the Scriptures.”

A MAN who has any belief in a God, and in a future state of rewards and punishments, must naturally feel anxious to know by what means God may be made his friend, and his future condition rendered happy. Upon these most interesting subjects of inquiry, however, man is by nature greatly ignorant. “Hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out¹?” Man is often too at a loss, with respect to the line of conduct which he ought to pursue, and frequently most powerfully disposed not to pursue that course which his better judgment would point out to him. “The way of man,” says the pro-

¹ Wisdom. ix. 16.

phet, "is not in himself: it is not in man "that walketh to direct his steps¹."

For the direction both of our faith and practice God has been graciously pleased to give us the holy Scriptures. He has given them to be "a lantern unto our feet, and a "light unto our paths²." It is upon the duty of hearing and reading the sacred volume, and upon the manner in which this duty should be performed, that I now wish to address you.

I. It can hardly be necessary to use many arguments for the purpose of enforcing the duty of reading and hearing the Scriptures, when you consider that they are the very word of God. "All Scripture," says St. Paul, "is given by inspiration of God³:" and we are taught by St. Peter, "that holy "men of God spake as they were moved by "the Holy Ghost⁴." Now, if the great and glorious God graciously condescends to speak to his creatures, it is plainly their duty humbly to listen to him. If he vouchsafes to send them a message, they clearly are bound diligently to attend to it. To neglect the Scriptures, accordingly, is to neglect him, whose word they are. When a message of importance is sent by some great and powerful man, it is received with attention and

¹ Jer. x. 23.

² 2 Tim. iii. 16.

³ Psalm cxix. 105.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 21.

respect. If a kind and indulgent parent addresses a letter to his children, that letter is read with affectionate regard. And with respect and regard, beyond all comparison greater, ought we to attend to the word of him that speaketh from heaven, to the message of our Father and our God. •

The duty of reading and hearing the Scriptures will farther appear, from the immense importance of the information which they convey to us. They were written for our learning, and are able to make us wise unto salvation¹. Reflect on the meaning of this expression of being *wise unto salvation*. We are placed in this world in a state of trial, and are all hastening on either to heaven or to hell, either to happiness or misery everlasting. How to obtain that happiness, or avoid that misery, we are by nature sadly ignorant; and by the same nature are sadly disposed to evil, strongly inclined to such a line of conduct, such tempers, and affections, of which misery must be the consequence. To rescue us from this state, the word of God was given to us. It was given to show us the way that we should walk in, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. It points out to us him to whom all the Scriptures bear witness, him who is the great Author of eternal salvation to all them that

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

obey him. If then the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation ; if they furnish a satisfactory answer to the anxious question, what shall I do to be saved ; surely we act like the enemies of our own souls—as if we did not wish to save them—if we refuse to have recourse to this storehouse of saving knowledge, if we neglect to search the Scriptures.

After asserting in general that the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, St. Paul in the next verse proceeds to point out more particularly the beneficial effects of the knowledge of them, in order to this great end. They “are profitable,” he tells us, “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness¹.” They are profitable for *doctrine* ; for teaching us all that it is important for us to know. They lead us to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves. They teach us that the world was at first called into being by the voice of the Almighty ; that man was created innocent and upright, but that he fell from his innocence, and by his fall entailed sin and death upon all his posterity. • They teach us the method adopted by an all-merciful God to rescue us from this lost state, and instruct us, that as “by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead :” that “as in

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

“ Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be “ made alive¹.” They farther make known to us the great doctrines, of the satisfaction made for sin by the death of the Son of God ; of the renovation of our natures by the Holy Spirit ; and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe for his soul’s health. In the most comprehensive sense of the word, therefore, they are profitable for *doctrine*. They are profitable also for *reproof*. The word which is here translated reproof, means also *conviction* or *refutation* of error. When left to himself, man is not only ignorant of what is true, but too frequently ready to embrace that which is false. There is perhaps hardly any imagination however vain, hardly any error however gross, which has not been adopted and upheld as true at some period of the world. When compared with the truth of the Scripture, all these errors fall to the ground. Errors in opinion have a natural tendency to produce a faulty and vicious practice. *Reproof* of every bad practice, of every sinful habit, comes most profitably from the holy Scriptures ; for they form a standard, by which every work is to be tried, whether it be good or whether it be evil ; and their reproofs are enforced by the threatening of eternal suffering.

But the word of God will not only serve

¹ 1 Cor. v. 21, 22.

to reprove what is wrong in practice, but to *correct* it, or set it right. It is profitable for *correction*. When a man is going on in a way that leads to destruction, without considering or being aware of it, it is some advantage to be told that he is wrong; but this information will but fill him with apprehensions, and perhaps despair, unless at the same time the right way is pointed out to him. This is the work of the holy Scriptures. When any one has contracted a sinful habit, they not only reprove him, and set before him the things that he hath done, but also correct him or set him right; “they will guide his feet in the way of peace,” and teach him the true and right way to happiness.

The Scriptures are indeed “profitable for “instruction in righteousness,” in every sense of the expression. They point out to us the righteousness of living, which God commands; the sober, righteous, and godly disposition and conduct, which he enjoins; and, above all, they direct us to him, who for our sakes fulfilled all righteousness, and through faith in whose atonement and mediation we are accounted righteous in the sight of God.

In another passage, St. Paul, speaking of the same Scriptures, says, “whatsoever “things were written aforetime were written “for our learning, that we through patience

“and comfort of the Scriptures might have “hope¹.” The Scriptures do indeed furnish the strongest ground for comfort and consolation in every sorrow. If we are depressed by poverty, and by anxious fears lest we or our families should be left utterly destitute, the Scriptures direct us to cast all our care upon him who careth for us; upon him who feedeth the fowls of heaven, and clotheth the lilies of the field, and will much more take care of the children of men². If we are mourning the death of those we love, the Scriptures tell us, that “blessed are the dead “which die in the Lord³”; that our departed friends have but passed before us on the journey of life; and they bid us not to sorrow like men that have no hope. If we are cast down by the sense of our numberless sins, and are overwhelmed with the dread of the divine displeasure, the Scriptures here also furnish us the strongest ground of consolation and encouragement. They guide our thoughts to him, who died that we might live: they tell us, that though our sins be as scarlet, yet if we heartily repent of, and forsake them, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall through his death “become “as white as snow⁴.”

And with respect to afflictions in general,

¹ Rom. xv. 4.

² Matt. vi. 28, &c.

³ Rev. xiv. 13.

⁴ Isaiah i. 18.

the Scriptures tell us, that calamities are not to be considered as happening by chance: that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, "neither doth trouble spring out of the "ground¹," but proceeds from him by whom the "hairs of our head are all numbered;" from him without whose permission even "a "sparrow doth not fall on the ground;" and that he means them for our good, that he chastens us for our profit. The sacred volume accordingly assures us, that afflictions are not to be regarded as marks of God's displeasure, but rather as tokens of his love; that "whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, "even as a father the son in whom he delighteth²;" that as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens; that consequently "happy is the man whom God correcteth³; "blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, "O Lord, and teachest in thy way." The Scriptures instruct us, like all the distinguished servants of God, to bow ourselves with meek resignation under his hand, to submit ourselves entirely to his good pleasure, to be prepared to say from our hearts, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth⁴ him good:" "Lord, not my will, but thine "be done." Above all, the Scriptures furnish the most strong consolation and the

¹ Job v. 6.² Job v. 17.² Prov. iii. 12.⁴ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

most animating *hope*, hope full of immortality, by directing our view beyond this lower world to that world where sorrow hath no place. Afflictions here, however painful, are to be regarded as light, because they endure but for a moment. If they last our whole life, that still is but as a moment, when compared with eternity. The word of God accordingly teaches us to set our hearts upon that place, "where only true joys are "to be found;" that place where God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes "of his "servants;" where "there shall be no more "death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither "shall there be any more pain¹." A hope of entering into this state is set before us in the Scriptures; a hope founded on the promises of him who cannot lie, and therefore to be taken as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.

Such then, are some of the reasons for searching the Scriptures. We should read and hear them because they are the word of God, the message from God to man: because they declare unto us the way of salvation; because they make known unto us the will of God; because they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; because they fur-

¹ Rev. xxi. 4.

nish us with ground for patience, consolation, and hope.

II. I will now, in the second place, proceed to say a few words on the manner in which this duty of searching the Scriptures should be performed.

•Read them, then, *frequently*; read them with *humility*; read them with *attention*; and a desire to practise what you read; read them with *fervent prayer* to God, by whose Spirit they were indited, that he would assist you in understanding them, and in making them contribute to the salvation of your souls.

First, read them *frequently*. It is a reproach—and a heavy reproach—justly cast on some people, that the Bible, the book of God, lies unopened in their houses. Let not this reproach be cast on you. You know how strictly God enjoined the study of his law under the Mosaic dispensation. “These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy

“house, and on thy gates¹.” And again in his charge to Joshua; “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein².” If the law deserved to have this diligent and constant study—and most certainly it did, inasmuch as it proceeded from God himself—how much rather does the Gospel? This careful study of the revealed will of God was always a mark of his faithful servants. In the description of a good man, in the first Psalm, it is said, “His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law will he exercise himself day and night.” The 119th Psalm abounds in passages expressing the like sentiment. Thus in the 9th verse, “Where-withal shall a young man cleanse his way? —even by ruling himself after thy word.” Again; “My delight shall be in thy statutes, and I will not forget thy word.” And again; “My delight shall be in thy commandments, and my study shall be in thy statutes.” It was the praise of the Bereans; that upon the first preaching of the Gospel, “they searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so³.” The consequence was, that “many of them believed.” And it is recorded to the honour of Timothy,

¹ Deut. vi. 6—9.² Josh. i. 8.³ Acts xvii. 11.

the fellow-labourer of St. Paul, that from a child he had known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus¹.

Secondly, read them with *humility*: with an humble teachable disposition, with a readiness to submit your own reason to the teaching of God. Although all that is necessary to salvation in the Scriptures is plain enough for the unlearned to understand, so plain "that wayfaring men, though fools," though simple and of a slow understanding, "shall not err therein²!" yet there are many parts of the Bible which present so much of difficulty, that the most learned men have not been able to agree upon their meaning. These difficulties are increased from the Scriptures having been written in foreign languages which have ceased to be spoken, and written in times and countries, the manners and customs of which were very different from our own. St. Peter, you know, says, that in St. Paul's Epistles, "are some things "hard to be understood, which they that "are unlearned and unstable," (*unstable*, not steady in their religious principles), "wrest "as they do also the other Scriptures unto "their own destruction³." If a man sits down to read the book of God with a proud

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15. ² Isaiah xxxv. 8. ³ 2 Pet. iii. 16.

conceit of his own abilities, of the powers of his own reason, he will be apt to give new and strange interpretations of his own to the words of Scripture; or perhaps to be led by seeming difficulties to reject the Bible altogether, and with it to give up all well-founded hope of a future life. Humility, an humble, teachable disposition, will prevent these evils. When St. Philip asked the Ethiopian Eunuch, "Understandest thou what 'thou readest?'" the reply was, "How can 'I, except some man should guide me'?" Humility will dispose us in the study of the Scriptures to make use of the assistance which is offered to us². A sincere member of the Church of England, in particular, will not, without great reason, depart from the interpretation of the doctrines of Scripture which is given in that Church in her Articles and Prayer Book. The Articles and Prayer Book were framed with great care and pains by men richly furnished with all learning, human and divine; men, like Apollos,

¹ Acts viii. 30, 31.

² I wish to take this opportunity of recommending to those who can afford it, the "Family Bible," lately published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. All human works have their imperfections; but the notes to the family Bible have been selected and brought together with much care and labour, and comprise a rich store of most useful information, and of strong and interesting incitements to practical piety.

“mighty in the Scriptures,” in the languages in which they were originally written; men too, who were ready to give up, and many of whom actually did give up, every thing, even life itself, for the doctrines in them expressed. Next to the declared sense of the Church of England, an humble minded member of that Church will be disposed to seek assistance in understanding the Scriptures from his spiritual Pastor, the minister of the parish in which he dwells, who is regularly appointed over him to watch for his soul.

Thirdly, read with *attention*. Many people, I fear, satisfy themselves with barely reading over a chapter or two of the Bible, without considering or endeavouring to impress upon their minds what they read. Such careless reading is attended with little advantage. We must not be satisfied with simply reading or hearing the Scriptures, but must “mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.” And we must not only digest them inwardly, but must practise them outwardly in our daily conversation and conduct. We must endeavour, by divine aid, to avoid whatever in thought, word, or deed, is contrary to the revealed will of God, and steadily to practise whatever the book of God commands. “In reading of God’s word,” says the Homily of our Church, “he not always most profiteth that is most

“ready in turning of the book, or in saying
“of it without the book; but he that is most
“turned into it, that is most inspired with
“the Holy Ghost, most in his heart and life
“altered and changed into that thing which
“he readeth; he that is daily less and less
“proud, less wrathful, less covetous, and less
“desirous of worldly and vain pleasures; he
“that daily forsaketh his old vicious life, in-
“creaseth in virtue more and more.”

Lastly, read the Scriptures with earnest prayer for divine assistance. We know that we can do nothing well without the help of the Holy Spirit, and we especially require the aid of that Spirit in reading the word of God. Our minds by nature are dark and blind, and stand in need of being enlightened by him who is the Father of lights. By nature we are sadly ignorant, and destitute of spiritual wisdom; but “if any of you
“lack wisdom,” says St. James, “let him
“ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally
“and upbraideth not¹.”

Allow me, my friends, to hope that you will be diligent in searching the Scriptures, and attentive to the great truths which they contain. Those who are themselves unable to read, should embrace every opportunity of hearing them read by others, by their

¹ James i. 5.

friends, their neighbours, or their children. All should be regular and attentive in listening to the sacred Scriptures in church.

Remember that God's word is intended to be a lantern unto your feet, and a light unto your path. If you neglect it, you will be in danger of walking on still in darkness. The Scriptures are the best source of patience and consolation. If you neglect them, where can you look for support and comfort, under the changes and chances, the many sorrows and calamities of this mortal life? The Scriptures, finally, are able to make you wise unto salvation. If you neglect them, are you not guilty of neglecting the offer of salvation, of putting from you the gift of eternal life?

Let me, then, again exhort you to the diligent and constant, the *daily*, study of the word of God. Pray earnestly to him to enlighten your understanding, and warm your hearts by the influence of that Spirit, by whose inspiration the Scriptures were given. In the words of the excellent Collect of our Church, humbly beseech God, who "has
" caused all holy Scriptures to be written for
" our learning, to grant that we may in such
" wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and in-
" wardly digest them, that by patience and
" comfort of his holy word, we may embrace,
" and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of

“everlasting life which he hath given us in
“our Saviour Jesus Christ¹.”

¹ May I be permitted to suggest, that in reading the Scriptures, we should read those parts especially which are most applicable to ourselves, and most suited to our comprehension. Those who are young in years, or young in understanding, will comparatively derive little edification from great part of the prophetic writings; and from those parts of the books of Moses which relate to the building and service of the Temple, to the Levitical rites, and to the municipal laws and regulations of the Jews: i. e. the latter part of Exodus, nearly the whole of Leviticus, and part of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Some of St. Paul's Epistles relate in great measure to questions and customs peculiar to the times in which they were written; and the doctrinal parts of his writings contain many things hard to be understood by young and unlearned persons. The twelfth and thirteenth chapters of Romans, the thirteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and the three last chapters of Ephesians, all persons would do well to commit to memory.

SERMON VII.

PRAYER.

1 THESS. v. 17.

“ Pray without ceasing.”

ONE of the most effectual means of maintaining a principle of religion in our hearts is prayer. In discoursing on this duty, I shall endeavour to set before you, First, some of the principal arguments for, or motives to, prayer; Secondly, the frame and disposition of mind with which our prayers ought to be accompanied: and, Thirdly, the times at which they should be offered up; to point out to you, in short, 1st, *why* we ought to pray; 2dly, *how* we ought to pray: and, 3dly, *when* we ought to pray.

* I. One great argument for prayer is drawn from the consideration of the many necessities of our nature, for the supply of which we depend entirely on the bounty of that Being, to whom our prayers are to be addressed.

Of the body, the wants are numberless,

and continually returning. We stand in constant need of food and clothing, of the protection of some roof to shelter us from the weather, of preservation from all kinds of evil accidents; and often of recovery from pain and sickness, or of fresh strength to enable us to bear it. As, for the supply of all these wants, we are to put our whole trust in the goodness of God, so we are to seek such supply by devoutly calling upon him in prayer. Thus, when the apostle directs us to "be careful," or over anxious, "for nothing;" he immediately adds, "but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And our blessed Lord, in the same discourse in which he teaches us for our food and raiment to depend upon him, who feeds the fowls of heaven and clothes the grass of the field, instructs us daily to pray for whatever is essential to life, to implore God to give us day by day our daily bread¹.

But if the wants of the body furnish a strong motive for prayer, a still stronger one is furnished by the wants of the soul. Such is the nature of man since the fall of Adam, that we cannot serve God acceptably without his grace, without the aid of his Holy Spirit. This grace, however, this assistance of God's

¹ *Matte vi.*

good Spirit, is promised to us in answer to our prayers. "Ask, and it shall be given you," says our Lord; "seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you¹." And that when he said this, he had particularly in view those spiritual assistances of which I have just spoken, may be inferred from what follows. "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The argument is shortly this. We shall be lost for ever, if we do not receive the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and, in order to receive it, we must seek it in diligent prayer.

Another argument for prayer is drawn from the tendency which it has in its own nature to *preserve us from sin*. One of the principal and most constant topics of our supplications to the throne of grace, is deliverance from temptations to evil, and from the bad passions and corruptions of our nature. Now the spirit of that man must be bold and shameless indeed, who can go on praying to God to deliver him from evil, while at the same time he does not try, does not use any exertion on his own part, to avoid what he knows to be displeasing to God, and to conquer the sinful dispositions,

¹ Matt. vii. 7. 11.

the evil propensities within him. It is an old saying, that either praying will make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make him leave off praying.

Again : there is not one of us but has reason to lament his deficiency in *heavenly-mindedness*. We all probably feel, that our souls are too prone to grovel upon earth, to fix themselves upon worldly things, and are sadly wanting in genuine religious feeling and fervency of spirit. Prayer is the most likely way to correct this evil ; not only as it is the appointed means of procuring the aid of God's good Spirit, but also from the tendency which it has in itself to raise and spiritualize our thoughts and affections. The habit of devoutly addressing ourselves to God in prayer, naturally leads our minds away from earthly and visible things, to those unseen things which are eternal ; it transports them from the objects of sense and whatever relates to this life only, to the world of spirits and the contemplation of heavenly subjects ; and keeps alive and nourishes within us some portion of that religious feeling, which the world and the flesh are continually labouring to extinguish.

But farther ; it is our duty to call upon God in prayer, because it is enjoined by numberless precepts in holy writ, and recommended by the example of our blessed Lord himself, and by that of all the true servants

and saints of God. Our Saviour directs us "to pray;" as well "as to watch, that we "enter not into temptation¹." He commands us to ask, that we may have; to seek, that we may find; to knock, that it may be opened unto us². He has given us in the Lord's prayer a most excellent form for the model or pattern of our devotions; and in two striking parables has instructed us, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint³." His chosen followers enforce these injunctions of their Divine Master. Thus St. James says, "if any of you lack wisdom;" (and we all do lack it,) "let him ask of "God⁴." Thus St. Paul bids us in the text to "pray without ceasing;" and in other places, "to continue instant in prayer⁵," and to watch unto the same with thanksgiving. He directs us to "pray always with all prayer "and supplication," and to "watch thereunto "with all perseverance⁶;" and in the first Epistle to Timothy, he wills "that men pray "every where, lifting up holy hands⁷."

Examples of fervency and perseverance in prayer abound in every part of the holy Scriptures, which have recorded many of the sublime and excellent petitions offered up by holy men of old to the throne of grace. I will not pretend to enumerate these, or to

¹ Matt. xxvi. 41.² Matt. vii. 7.³ Luke xi. 5. and

xviii. 3.

⁴ James i. 5.⁵ Rom. xii. 12.⁶ Eph. vi. 18.⁷ 1 Tim. ii. 8.

tell of the prayers of the patriarchs, of Moses, of Daniel, and of those many pious souls, who, by means of prayer, walked with God while on earth, and whose devotion will in the world to come be rewarded through the merits of Christ with everlasting happiness. Our blessed Lord, who gave us an example that we should follow his steps, was a pattern to us in this as in all other instances. We read repeatedly of his earnestness in prayer, and that he continued whole nights in prayer to God. His chosen followers were distinguished like their divine Master for the fervency of their devotions; and yourselves well know, that earnest and persevering prayer has always been a leading feature in the character of the true servants of God.

II. I proceed now in the second place to consider the qualifications, the disposition of mind with which our prayers ought to be accompanied, in order to their being accepted of God; in other words, to point out *how* we ought to pray.

One of the first requisites of acceptable prayer, is a sincere wish and endeavour to get the better of our sins. For, what is it but an instance of gross hypocrisy, an insulting mockery of God, to pray with our lips that he would enable us to overcome our corruptions, while we feel in our hearts no real wish, and in fact do not try to be delivered from them? Thus it is said, "He that

“turneth away his ear from hearing the law,
 “even his prayer shall be an abomination¹,”
 and again, “the sacrifice of the wicked is
 “abomination to the Lord².” Where you
 will observe, that it is not the having sinned,
 or the feeling much of sin still remaining
 within us that should prevent our praying to
 God:—this sense of sin, if attended with an
 earnest desire to be delivered from it, is one
 of the strongest arguments for prayer:—but
 it is the persevering boldly in wickedness,
 without any endeavour to amend.

Again; our prayers to be acceptable must
 be offered in faith. “Let a man ask in
 “faith³,” says St. James; and our Saviour,
 “whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer *believing*
 “ye shall receive⁴.” Our prayers must pro-
 ceed from a firm belief that God is, and that
 he is a God that heareth prayer; from a full
 persuasion that his ear is ever open to receive
 our supplications, and that he will grant
 them, if not immediately, yet in his own
 good time; provided, that is, that they are
 offered according to his will, and that the
 granting them will be for our own real be-
 nefit. This faith, this belief, is founded upon
 the promises of his Son, to which I have al-
 ready referred: “Ask, and it shall be given
 “you,” seek and ye shall find, knock and it

¹ Prov. xxviii. 9.² Prov. xv. 8.³ James i. 6.⁴ Matt. xxi. 22.

“shall be opened unto you¹.” From this promise, and many other passages in holy writ, we know, as the apostle asserts, that “if any man ask according to God’s will, he “heareth him.”

Nearly allied to this qualification of prayer, if indeed it is not rather to be considered as a branch, or part of it, is the precept that our supplications be offered in the name of Christ. Our iniquities you know *had* separated between us and our God. Christ however, by bearing in his own person the punishment of our sins, has reconciled us to his Father, and stands ever ready to make intercession for us, and, as our Mediator and High Priest, to present our prayers before the throne of the Most High. No man can come unto the Father, he tells us, but by him; and it is through him that we have access to the Father. He therefore enjoins us to offer all our prayers in his name. “Whatever ye “shall ask the Father in my name, he will “give it you².”

Humility and contrition of spirit form another very important qualification of prayer. When we address ourselves to God, we should “fall low on our knees before his footstool,” penetrated with a deep sense of our unworthiness, and grieving at the remembrance of our numberless transgressions. “To this

¹ Matt. vii. 7.

² John xvi. 23

“man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit¹ ;” and again, “a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise².” The gracious acceptance which attended the lowliness of the poor publican in the parable is familiar, I trust, to most of you.

It is indispensably requisite, when we call upon God in prayer, that we should be *attentive* to what we are about. If while we pretend to be praying to him, we wilfully suffer our thoughts to wander to any earthly vanity, we certainly are in some degree chargeable with the guilt of drawing near to God with our lips, while our hearts are far from him. Let not, however, any one be discouraged by this expression. The best men, who are most exemplary in their devotions, are not at all times able entirely to conquer this wandering, this distraction of the mind. It is an instance of human weakness, which, it may be, will cling to us as long as we continue to be clothed in mortality. We must lament it as such, and strive and pray against it. If we wilfully give way without thus contending against it, it is no doubt highly blameable ; and we must bear in mind, that in proportion as this wandering of the mind in prayer is suffered to prevail, so far are we wanting in genuine piety, so far do we fall

¹ Isaiah lxvi. 2.

² Psalm li. 17.

short of that holiness, the attainment of which ought to be the great object of our lives.

But we must not only be attentive in our devotions, we must also be *earnest, importunate, and fervent*. The spiritual blessings for which we ought principally to pray are blessings of the greatest importance, blessings without which we shall be lost for ever. We should therefore sue for them with no little warmth and earnestness. We should pray with heart and soul, like men who are begging for their life. If we prefer our petitions coldly and languidly, we act as if we had no proper sense of the inestimable value of those blessings which we pretend to implore, almost as if we meant to be refused, or, at least, did not greatly care whether we were refused or not.

And here I would observe—and I must beg you to pay particular attention to the observation—that this attention and earnestness must accompany not only our private devotions, but also the public prayers of the Church. The greater part of those prayers indeed are pronounced aloud by the minister alone, but the whole congregation should take part in them in their hearts, and make them their own, by saying, *Amen*, at the conclusion of each. Some men in Church appear to listen to the prayers as they listen to the lessons or to the sermon, without in any way joining in them. But surely this is to

defeat one great end of public worship, which was instituted that all might heartily join together in putting up their common supplications to God, and by the united strength of their prayers draw down his blessing upon them. When the prayers in Church are pronounced by the minister, he is not praying alone, but is speaking in the name of the whole congregation, who are not merely to listen to what he says, but are themselves to join with earnestness and devotion.

III. And now, in the third place, I will offer a few remarks upon the times, at which our prayers should be offered up; will suggest to you *when* you ought to pray. The direction of the apostle is, that we should pray every where, and at all times should "pray," in short, "without ceasing." Not that we are required to be always on our knees, to be continually without intermission engaged in offices of devotion. This would be inconsistent with the lawful business of this world. What is required is, that we should always be in a readiness to pray; that we should very often offer up short ejaculations and petitions for protection and spiritual strength; and that we should have stated times for devotion, in the observance of which we should be regular and constant. Of Daniel we read "that he kneeled on his knees three times a day¹," and prayed and

¹ Dan. vi. 10.

gave thanks to God. And David says of himself, "at evening, and morning, and at noon—day will I pray, and that instantly." It were well if we followed the example of these distinguished servants of the Most High; but, at least, every morning and evening we ought to direct our supplications to God, imploring the pardon of our sins, and his protection from dangers spiritual and temporal.

Besides our private devotions, those, who are fathers and masters of families, should observe the old and excellent custom of family prayer; and none of us ought ever, without some very sufficient reason, to absent ourselves on the Lord's day from the public prayers of the Church.

It has appeared then, I trust, that it is both our interest and our duty to call upon God in prayer, because prayer is the instituted means of obtaining his blessings, temporal and spiritual; because in itself it has a tendency to keep us from sin, to nourish in us a heavenly frame of mind, and because it is enforced by the precepts of holy writ, and recommended by the example of all the true servants of God.

For this purpose, I would recommend either the Lord's Prayer, General Confession, Collect for the week, and morning and evening Collects; or Bp. Wilson's Family Prayers; or Bp. Gibson's; or the selection of Family Prayers from the New Manual, which is published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

It has appeared in the second place, that in order to their being accepted, they must proceed from a humble and penitent heart; must be offered up in faith, and in the name of Christ; must be preferred with attention, with earnestness, and with warmth; and that they must be not only fervent, but also frequent.

My friends, let us seriously examine our own conduct by what has been above urged. Are we in the habit of thus calling upon God, or, as it is in the text, of praying without ceasing? We read of men, who say in their hearts, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him; or what profit shall we have if we pray unto him;" and of others, who are branded with the censure, that "they have not called upon God." Are we liable to the same reproach? If we are living without prayer, we are living in a state of the utmost danger; from which we may indeed be recovered by divine grace, but one of the first symptoms of our recovery will be found in our calling upon God. Or, though we do sometimes pray with our lips, do we pray without attention, without earnestness? While we outwardly seem to be engaged in our devotions, do we wilfully suffer our thoughts to wander to earthly things, without lamenting and striving against this waywardness of spirit? In proportion as this is the case, we have reason to fear that our

hearts are not right with God, that we are but little influenced by real piety, that we are still far from the kingdom of heaven. We must contend against this dulness of religious feeling to the utmost of our power; must beseech God to assist us in our prayers, and to pour into our hearts the genuine spirit of grace and supplication.

To conclude. Let us be frequent and earnest in private prayer; let us pray in our families constantly and devoutly; and let nothing but some real and weighty hindrance prevent us from taking part in the public service of the Church. In short, let us “pray without ceasing; let us continue instant in prayer, praying always with all prayer and supplication, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.”

SERMON VIII.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.

HEB. X. 25.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

THE first teachers of our holy religion, and the servants of God in every age, appear to have laid peculiar stress upon the duty of “assembling together” for the purpose of public worship. For not only is it in itself a duty of great importance, the neglect of which seems, generally speaking, to imply no little disregard of our religion and of its divine Author, but because neither can doctrines be inculcated, nor other duties enforced with any prospect of success, while this continues to be neglected. For discourses upon subjects of whatever importance, are necessarily lost to those who refuse to come to hear them, who literally “set at nought their instruction, and will none of their reproof.” To this duty, therefore, I now wish to draw

your serious attention, and in treating of it I shall consider, first, the reasons on which it is founded; and secondly, the excuses which too many persons are ready to advance to vindicate their neglect of it.

I. First then; the public service of our Church is instituted, and excellently calculated, for two important purposes distinct in their nature, but both tending to the same great end. These are first, the joining together in public or common prayer and praise to God; and secondly, attention to the instruction, the exhortation, the admonition, and reproof contained in his holy word.

Let us consider the first of these, the joining in common or public prayer and praise to God, and examine—I will not say in what respect it is superior to—but in what it differs from, prayer addressed to him in private. And here I must request the particular attention of those persons who are in the habit of saying, that they worship God sufficiently at home; that they can serve him in their own houses as well and as effectually as at Church. We may remark then in the first place, that the holy religion which we profess is a social religion; a religion, the very nature as well as precepts of which, require its sincere professors to have fellowship or communion one with another; and this communion is particularly to be maintained in prayer and other

religious offices. Accordingly we read of its first teachers, the Apostles, that they “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication¹,” that they “were continually in the temple praising and blessing God² ;” and we are told of their earliest disciples, that “they continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in common prayers³ ;” and that they resorted to the place “where prayer was wont to be made⁴.” So necessary, indeed, was this duty considered, that in the passage which I have selected for my text, “the forsaking the assembling of themselves together,” appears to have been deemed by the Apostle as a sort of apostacy, as a desertion of the faith of Christ.

Again. Many of the blessings which we ask from heaven, are blessings of a public nature. “O, pray for the peace of Jerusalem⁵,” says the royal Psalmist ; the Apostle exhorts that “supplications” and “prayers” be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority⁶ ;” and we are to pray for the general welfare and prosperity of the Church and nation to which we belong. And surely it is peculiarly fitting, that supplications for public and common blessings should be offered in common ; that we should join

¹ Acts i. 14.² Luke xxiv. 53.³ Acts ii. 42.⁴ Acts xvi. 13.⁵ Psalm cxxiii. 6.⁶ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

together in imploring those mercies, of which, as members of society, we stand in need.

Of the especial blessing promised by our Saviour to the social exercise of religion, you are continually reminded in the prayer at the conclusion of the ordinary Church service. "Where two or three," says he, "are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them¹." Does it not follow, that to forsake the "assembling of ourselves together" for public worship, is to act as if we despised this blessing, as if we set no value upon this immediate presence of our Lord?

Farther yet. We are bound to do all that we can to promote the interests of religion; in other words to advance the glory of God: we are bound to "let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven²." And doubtless this great end is more advanced by public than by private prayer. It is of the nature of the latter to shun observation; to be known only to God and to ourselves; but by joining in public prayer, we openly profess ourselves to be the servants and worshippers of the only true God, and call upon all around us to worship him also, and to "fall low on their knees before his footstool." And where a whole congrega-

¹ Matt. xviii. 20.

² Matt. v. 16.

tion join earnestly and devoutly in offering up their common supplications to their Maker and Redeemer, it is obvious how much this must contribute to the individual edification of its members, and to the nourishment and increase of a devotional feeling¹.

* *Praise and thanksgiving*, even for private and personal mercies, and still more for public blessings, seem peculiarly to demand to be offered up in public. A mind really penetrated with gratitude, is glad and anxious to "show forth" its thankfulness, to celebrate the kindness of him, by whom it has been benefited, and "to make the voice of its "praise to be heard." This was the manner in which the man after God's own heart, "the "sweet singer of Israel," expressed the feelings of a grateful soul. He rejoiced to give thanks in *public*. "I will not keep back thy "loving-kindness and truth from the great "congregation." "I will pay my vows unto "the Lord," says he, "in the sight of all his "people, even in the courts of the Lord's

¹ Greatly would it tend to promote the high purposes for which public worship was instituted, if the *whole congregation* would join *audibly* in those parts of the service in which they are directed to join;—for instance, in the General Confession, the Lord's Prayer, the alternate verses in the Psalms and Hymns, in the Creeds, and the Responses in general. Whenever the clerk's voice is heard, the voice of the whole congregation should be heard also.

“house, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem¹.”

The Book of Psalms indeed contains the fittest expression of every branch of devotion, and the religious feelings of David *ought* to be the feelings of every one of us. Let me beg of you to consider, how highly he valued the privilege of taking part in the public worship of God, and how deeply he lamented the temporary privation of it. “O how amiable,” says he, in the lxxxivth Psalm, “are thy dwellings; thou Lord of hosts. My soul hath a desire and a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord¹.” “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be always praising thee;” “for one day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of ungodliness.” The forty-second Psalm appears to be a pathetic lamentation, of his being for a season deprived of that public exercise of devotion in the Lord’s house, in which his soul delighted. “Like as the hart desireth the water brooks; so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?” “Now when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself, for I went with the

¹ Psalm cxvi.

“multitude, and brought them forth into the
“house of God¹.”

O, my friends, why have we not more of this feeling? why are not we, like him, “glad
“when they say unto us, We will go into the
“house of the Lord?” if we are not, is it not
a symptom that we are sadly wanting in spiritual mindedness and religious affections? that we have great reason, earnestly to implore God by his grace to soften our hearts, and to fill them with the genuine spirit of piety and devotion?

Such then, my friends, are some of the reasons, upon which I conceive this duty of public prayer to be founded; and you will observe, that all that I have hitherto urged, applies as much to divine service when there is *no sermon*, as when there *is one*. We are required “not to forsake the assembling ourselves together” for the purpose of public worship, by the whole spirit of our holy religion; it is our duty to take part in this worship, because of its tendency to advance the glory of God, and to promote Christian edification; because it is peculiarly calculated to draw down public blessings; because it is the fittest expression of our thankfulness; because it is recommended to us by the example of David, and of all the faithful servants of God.

¹ Psalm xlii.

But the service of the Church was instituted not only for the purpose of common prayer ; it provides also for the instruction and edification of her members by “ reading the “ word of God,” and by “ preaching.”

The word of God we know is able to make us wise unto salvation¹, and, in order to this, “ is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for “ correction, for instruction in righteous-
“ ness.” And which of us is there who does not stand in need of some, or of all of these ? The word of God “ is profitable for doctrine “ and instruction in righteousness.” Man by nature “ is like a wild ass’s colt²,” and greatly ignorant of those things, which belong to his soul’s health. There are too many persons, who though living in a Christian country, yet continue sunk in this ignorance, and in danger of perishing with those who know not God. To rescue them from this state of darkness and of the shadow of death, the ministry of the word was appointed by the Son of God ; for both faith and saving knowledge “ come by hearing, and hearing “ by the word of God ;” but “ how shall “ they,” for whose benefit this word was intended, “ how shall they hear without a “ preacher ?” Jesus Christ himself came as it was foretold of him by the prophets to preach the Gospel to the poor, and we read

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.

² Job xi. 12.

that ~~they~~ to whom he preached in person “heard him gladly :” and with good reason heard ~~they~~ him, for he had the words of eternal life. But does he not still speak to us in the words of his Apostles and Evangelists? Does he not still address to us the words of eternal life, in those Scriptures which are indeed able to make us wise unto salvation? If this be so, what must be said of those men, who are guilty of wilfully refusing to come to hear God’s word in God’s house? Do they not act as if they loved darkness rather than light? as if they valued not the Gospel of salvation? as if they despised and set at nought both the ministers and the word of the Son of God? If they continue ignorant, *their* ignorance is wilful; if they “are destroyed through lack of knowledge¹,” their destruction is of themselves.

But possibly some persons will plead that *they* are *not* ignorant; or that, even if they are, they have the means of instruction in their own hands; that they are able to read; and that from the Bible and other books they can learn their duty, and how to please God sufficiently at their own homes, without having recourse to the public instructions of the Church. . . . Allowing all this to be true; admitting that they are already equal to a “scribe instructed unto the kingdom of hea-

¹ Hos. iv. 6.

“ven¹,” or that they may without difficulty become so, still these persons are not exempted from the duty of joining in the “public prayers” of the Church, even supposing that they need not her instructions; for the obligation to take part in public worship is, as I before observed, distinct from that of coming for religious information, and is equally incumbent upon *all*, upon the wise and the unwise, upon the learned no less than the unlearned. But farther; the word of God is not only profitable for doctrine and instruction, it is also profitable for *exhortation*, for *correction* and *reproof*. Superior learning and knowledge are not always attended with corresponding holiness of life. Even those who are well instructed, stand sometimes in need of being exhorted to greater fervency of spirit, to greater zeal in their Christian warfare; they sometimes may even require admonition and reproof. Admonition and reproof it is true are unpleasant to the pride of our corrupted nature; and it may be, that there are some men so devoid of all Christian lowliness of mind, and so ill able to brook admonition, as for this very reason to absent themselves from the house of God: men, who though their minister is bound at the peril of his own soul to warn them², are yet offended with him for

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

² Ezek. iii. 17.

so doing, and who withdraw themselves from his ministry lest the evil of their ways should be plainly set before them. All pride however, and spiritual pride more especially, is most dangerous; and no light vengeance may be feared by those, who refuse to be corrected by the book, or by the ministers, of God, and cast "God's word behind them."

The service of the Church then was instituted, first, for public or common prayer; and, secondly, for public instruction, exhortation, and admonition from the word of God. Upon each of these accounts it is the duty of all Christians to resort to it. It is also our duty, as it is the principal part of the observance which we owe to the Sabbath or Lord's day. The obligation to keep holy one day in seven, and to dedicate it to the service of the Most High, we all acknowledge: and we all, I trust, are sensible, that one great reason of the institution of the Sabbath, was to preserve the knowledge of God and of his ways, and regularly to call off our thoughts from the world and things of the world, and for a time at least to fix them on those unseen things that relate to eternity. Doubtless then, to neglect the public service of the Church, is to act contrary to this obligation, is to profane the Lord's day, and in no slight degree to frustrate and render vain the gracious purposes for which it was appointed.

• I am now, as I proposed, in the next place,

to consider some of the excuses, which men usually advance, to vindicate their neglect of public worship. That there may be sufficient excuse for absence from the house of God, I am ever ready to allow. Sickness for instance, or reasonable fear of sickness; attendance upon the sick; or the care of infant children, are of this description. And when a house stands remote from others, or contains many things of value, it may perhaps be inexpedient to leave it entirely empty and unguarded. The pleas, however, which are frequently advanced are miserably weak, and too clearly show from their very nature, that they proceed from a disregard for religion, a disinclination to the service of God. Some persons, for instance, endeavour to excuse themselves, because they are prevented by some worldly business, by some household cares and occupations. Since the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, works of necessity and of charity are on that day permitted to us; and if they can at no other time be performed, may perhaps even excuse our absence from Church. But are the cares and the business which these persons plead, to be classed with either of these? Oftentimes they are works which might have been transacted in the preceding week, or deferred till some day following; and oftentimes the Lord's holy day is purposely set apart for some worldly occupation,

such as the settlement of accounts, such as journeys of amusement or of business; sometimes such as the cleansing of their dwelling and of their apparel. Even during those six days in which men ought to work, it is very possible to have our hearts and minds so far engaged in the affairs of this world, as to risk the loss of the one thing needful: if they are suffered to induce us to neglect the care of our souls and the service of God on God's own day, they become most dangerous, and we have reason to fear that we are the servants of Mammon, not the servants of the living God. And we are not ignorant that those men in the parable "who all with one consent began to make excuse" for neglecting the invitation of their Lord, on account of some worldly hindrance, were not so excused, but counted unworthy of the heavenly feast, and left to perish in outer darkness.

Others again will, perhaps, plead that they are ashamed to appear at Church on account of the poorness of their clothes. If the meanness of your raiment is the consequence of your own neglect, you may indeed take shame to yourselves; but this is no excuse for neglecting your duty to God. If it is the effect of unavoidable poverty, it is no reproach to you; and if any one mocks or

makes sport of you for it, that man will have much to answer for at the last day; for he that despiseth the poor, as well as "he that "oppresseth" him, "reproacheth his Maker¹." In all such cases recollect that God does not look to the apparel, and outward appearance, but to the inward thoughts and dispositions of the heart.

But not to occupy more of your time in examining these and the like excuses; let each person, who is inclined to advance them, seriously ask his own heart, and let him ask it as in the immediate presence of God, whether he really wishes to join in the prayers of the congregation, and is really grieved when unavoidably prevented; let him ask himself whether his excuse for absence from Church is such as ought in reason to be admitted; whether in fine it is such, as he could venture to plead before the judgment-seat of Christ. There are indeed, I fear, some men who neglect public worship, without even pretending to make any excuse for their conduct. They absent themselves from Church, from a mere spirit of indolence and carelessness. They think it of no consequence whether they go thither or not, and had rather spend the time in sleep, or in amusement, by their fire-sides, or in idle empty talk with thoughtless men like-minded

¹ Prov. xiv. 31.

with themselves. And what can we say to such persons as these? Alas! if they would reflect seriously but for a single moment, surely they would be sensible that they are destitute of genuine religion; that instead of being possessed of that fervency of spirit which is recommended by the Apostle, they are sunk in a deadly slumber, in a fatal spiritual lethargy, which, unless they are roused from it by some alarming dispensation of Providence, and the influences of God's good Spirit, will terminate in the everlasting destruction of body and soul in hell¹.

And now by way of conclusion permit me to repeat the substance of what I have advanced.

It is your duty to resort regularly to divine service—and this both when there is no sermon, and when there is one;—because it is your duty to take part in common prayer, on account of its peculiar tendency to promote the glory of God, and the edification of

¹ I believe it sometimes happens that men absent themselves from Church from a dislike to their minister. Now, in the first place, it is probable that this dislike is entirely groundless, occasioned it may be by their minister's faithful execution of his office. But even supposing it to be well-founded, yet what a weak pretext is this for neglecting a known duty? Those who go to Church, go thither not to please their minister, but to please their God. For a man to stay away, to neglect the service of God, and the care of his own salvation, because he dislikes his minister, is an instance of folly unworthy a reasonable being.

man; on account of the especial blessing and presence of our Saviour promised to it, and because it is recommended by the precepts and example of the faithful servants of God. It is also your duty to come to Church for the sake of the *instruction*, the *exhortation*, the *admonition*, there addressed to the congregation by God's minister. And farther, it is your duty, because it is an important part of the observance due to the Lord's day. The truth of what I have said on this subject, you are yourselves I am persuaded all ready to allow. Let me intreat you then seriously to reflect, that every time that you deliberately forsake "the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is;" every time that you wilfully absent yourselves from Church, without a really good and weighty reason, you are guilty of sinning against God with your eyes open, are guilty of leaving undone what you know and acknowledge you ought to do. Of the danger of such wilful disobedience you cannot be ignorant. But surely, my friends, you will not act so foolishly; you will not be such enemies to your own souls. Let me rather hope that you will make the "Sabbath of the Lord," as in other respects, so especially in this, "a delight, the holy of the Lord, and "honourable¹:" that so far from neglecting,

¹ Isaiah lviii. 13.

you will be anxious to take part in his public worship, and like David be sincerely grieved when you are unavoidably prevented; that you will really take pleasure in the public exercise of devotion, and will rejoice to resort to the house of God “with the voice of
 “praise and thanksgiving, with the multitude
 “that keep holy” day.”

SERMON IX.

BAPTISMAL VOW.

DEUT. iv. 23.

“Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God.”

ALTHOUGH God the eternal Spirit is to be worshipped with a spiritual worship, yet the devotion of the mind may be assisted by sensible objects. It has accordingly pleased the divine Author of our religion to appoint certain significant rites to be the means of conveying to us God's grace, while at the same time they have in themselves a natural tendency to excite and strengthen a religious frame and temper of soul. Such rites are the two Sacraments: for by the word Sacrament, you know, is meant “an outward and visible sign”—a sign that may be seen—“of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us;” which sign must have been “ordained” or appointed “by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive such grace, and as a pledge” or token “to assure us” that we do,

receive it. The only two Sacraments thus appointed by Christ are Baptism and the Lord's Supper; both of which are declared by our Church to be "generally necessary to "salvation," necessary to the salvation of all those who have it in their power to partake of them.

The first of these Sacraments is Baptism.

The necessity of Baptism appears to arise from the lost state in which man is by nature. The natural state of man is repeatedly called in Scripture "the flesh." Our Saviour says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh¹:" St. Paul assures us, "that they that are in "the flesh cannot please God²;" and tells the Ephesians, that they had heretofore been "dead in trespasses and sins³," had been "the children of wrath even as others³." Accordingly our Church begins her office for Public Baptism with reminding the congregation "that all men are conceived and born "in sin, and that our Saviour Christ saith, "none can enter the kingdom of heaven except he be born anew of water and of the "Holy Ghost." This plainly refers to our Lord's conference with Nicodemus, in which he says, "Except a man be born again—born "of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter "into the kingdom of God⁴." The rite of

¹ John iii. 6.

² Rom. viii. 8.

³ Ephes. ii. 1, &c.

⁴ John iii. 3, 5.

Baptism had been before in use among the Jews: and that they were supposed not to be ignorant of its spiritual signification, we may infer from our Lord's saying to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest "not these things?" When St. John came as the harbinger of the Messiah, he came baptizing those who repented of their sins. And our Lord himself, though he needed it not, yet submitted to be baptized, in order that he might fulfil all righteousness. And when the time came that the Christian religion was to be preached throughout the world, he adopted the rite of Baptism, as the means of admission to the privileges of the Gospel. Thus in his commission to the Apostles to make disciples of all nations, he charged them to baptize them, "in the "name of the Father, and of the Son, and of "the Holy Ghost¹." From that time to the present, Baptism, the washing of regeneration, has been the instrument of admission into the Church of Christ; and thus our Catechism instructs us, that in Baptism "we "change a state of wrath for a state of grace; "that in Baptism we are made members of "Christ, children of God, and inheritors of "the kingdom of heaven." Members of the Church of Christ have an interest in the promises made to that Church, in the promise

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19.

of the Spirit among the rest. The offices for Baptism, accordingly, consider the baptized person as being made God's own child by adoption, as being regenerate.

The Benefits of Baptism being so great, and its necessity so apparent, it is very right and fitting that parents should take an early opportunity of bringing their children to the baptismal font. The Prayer Book says, that "children who are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved;" consequently, a parent who for a long time willfully defers the baptism of his child, acts as if he was regardless of its soul's health. You will not think, that there is any impropriety in entering into covenant with God *infants*, who from their tender age cannot understand the conditions of that covenant, if you bear in mind that God himself appointed, that under the Old Testament dispensation, children should be entered into covenant with him, by the sacrament of Circumcision, when they were only eight days old. Now the Christian sacrament of Baptism appears to stand in the place of the Jewish sacrament of Circumcision; like that, it is the instituted means of entering into covenant with God; and certainly there is no reason why it should not be administered at an equally early age. Little children, we know, are in the Gospel peculiarly invited to come to Christ, who "was much displeased with those who would have kept them from him." Suffer little children," said he, "to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." If children were capable of being the peculiar objects of Christ's care and attention, and peculiarly fitted to be members of his kingdom, surely they are capable of being admitted into covenant with him by Baptism. When we read of the Apostles baptizing whole households, it is fair to infer, that the children in their families were not excluded. Again, St. Paul represents the children of believing parents as being *holy*; and if holy, certainly not incapable of being made members of the

"and") to maintain out their old ways, &c.

I am fully persuaded, that none of you can be so ignorant as to suppose, that this glorious inheritance, in the midst of those who come to years of discretion, is forced upon us, whether we will accept it or not. You all well know, that the title to it is conferred, upon the condition of our fulfilling our part of the agreement; upon the condition that we adhere to the vow and promise into which we then entered. And I am persuaded also, that you cannot help seeing, that if a man of mature years, lives in the neglect of his baptismal vow, his baptism, so far from being of any use to him, must rather increase his condemnation; must increase it, inasmuch as he is guilty of despising the offered mercy of God, guilty of deserting or drawing back from a solemn vow. I am satisfied, that you cannot help seeing, and allowing this. Suffer me then to direct your attention to a few particulars in your vow of baptism, and to intreat you to consider seriously, whether you have kept it or not. This I am sensible is a trite and common subject,

Church of God by Baptism; but probably called holy for this very reason, because they had been sanctified or made holy by the washing of regeneration. For all these reasons, supported by the constant and uniform practice of the Church of Christ from the earliest ages, we hold, in the language of the 27th Article, that "the Baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ."

but there is no subject more useful, no subject which more requires to be again and again insisted on.

You engaged, then, in the first place, “to renounce the devil and all his works; the pomps and vanity of this wicked world; and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.” Have you adhered to this engagement? Have you in reality thus renounced the three great enemies of man’s salvation?

The devil you know is the author of sin. His peculiar works are pride, envy, malice, lying, and tempting men to transgress against God. Have you carefully avoided all these works of the devil? To be lifted up with *pride* especially is the way to “fall into the condemnation of the devil¹.” Are we free from pride? Are we humble in mind, and lowly in our behaviour, both towards God and man? Again; *envy* is said by a wise though uninspired writer to be one of the characteristics of the great enemy; “through envy of the devil came death into the world².” Do we ever secretly repine at the good which happens to a neighbour? When we see another, whom our pride perhaps tempts to regard as less deserving than ourselves, in prosperous circumstances, and getting on in the world, while we continue in a poor and low condition, do we feel no

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 6.

² Wisdom ii. 24.

lurking grudge, no emotion of envy? Do you feel no such emotions when you see or hear of a poor neighbour partaking of bounty, from which you derive no benefit? If you do, you have not forsaken the works of the devil.

To bear any *malice* or *hatred* in our hearts, to wish to be revenged upon those, who, as we think, have injured us, is to partake of the character of him, who is made up of malice, and who "was a murderer from the "beginning¹." If, therefore, you wish to keep your baptismal vow, avoid carefully every feeling of hatred or malice, every desire of revenge.

Nothing is more directly the work of the devil than *lying*; for he, we are told by our Lord, is a liar, and the father of lies². If ever therefore you are guilty of lying; if either the fear of suffering, or the hope of gain, or any other motive whatever, should induce you to be guilty of wilful falsehood, you are guilty of doing one of the works of the devil, and consequently of breaking your baptismal vow.

Still more, if possible, are you chargeable with this guilt, if, not content with sinning against God yourself, you do the office of the tempter, and try to prevail on others to do what you and they know to be wrong; if

¹ John viii. 44.

² Ibid.

you seduce them into drunkenness, or unchastity, or profaneness, or any other violation of the divine law.

You renounce, in the second place, "the pomps and vanity of this wicked world." The world has numberless methods of tempting us to desert our fidelity to God. I will not pretend to mention them all, but will call your attention to one or two of the most dangerous of them. Do we then never fall in with the stream, with the common practice and manners of those around us, without considering whether it is warranted or not by the commandments of God? Do we never suffer the dread of the ridicule or the laughter of men; the fear of being thought or called singular or precise, to frighten us from serious religion, from what we feel and know to be our duty? If we are guilty of such unmanly cowardice, we should remember and tremble at the words of our Saviour, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, whosoever shall be ashamed of religion, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Our fidelity to God is endangered both by the men of the world, and by the things of the world. If we have escaped the danger

arising from the former; how do we stand with regard to the latter? The cares and business of this life may lawfully be attended to, and ought to be attended to, in due subordination to the care of the soul. But, do we never suffer them to occupy the first place in our attention? Do we never suffer them to make us neglect religion? never suffer them to choke the word of God, and render it unfruitful? Remember, if when the service of God calls you one way, you deliberately permit the service of the world to lead you in the opposite direction, you take the world for your master rather than the Almighty, you are the servants of Mammon, not the servants of the living God; you are the slaves of that world which at your Baptism you solemnly renounced.

You renounced also all the sinful lusts of the flesh. If you ask what these are, St. Paul tells you in the 5th chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. "The works of the flesh," says he "are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, and such like." Carefully read over this passage, and reflect seriously, that if you have been guilty of any of these works of the flesh, you have broken your baptismal vow. The sin of fornication, all instances of un-

chastity, are spoken of in Scripture as peculiarly repugnant to the Christian profession, as peculiarly dangerous in their consequences. *Wrath*, or immoderate anger; *variance*, or quarrelling; and *drunkenness*, are also, you will observe, classed among those works of the flesh, which are violations of the baptismal covenant, and which exclude those who are guilty of them from the kingdom of God.

The second great branch of your engagement was, "belief in all the articles of the "Christian Faith." These are shortly brought together in the Apostles' Creed. Consider now how far you understand, and really believe, the several Articles which that Creed contains.

The most important of them are, belief in God the Father, who created; in God the Son, who redeemed; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth you. Have you sincerely embraced, and do you stedfastly hold, these fundamental articles of faith? Do you really believe in God the Father, who made you and all the world? Do you preserve upon your minds a constant sense of his presence, and are you guided in all you do, say, or think, by a general view to his will and his glory? Do you effectually believe in God the Son who redeemed you and all mankind? Are you really persuaded in your heart, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did by his death upon the cross make satisfaction for

your sins, and the sins of the whole world? Have you a thankful remembrance of his death, and do you show your thankfulness, not with your lips only, but in your life?

Do you believe in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth you, and all the elect people of God? Are you sensible that your nature is so weak and corrupted, that you cannot do any thing that is acceptable to God without the aid of his Spirit, and do you seek for that aid in fervent prayer to Him, who giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Do you seek it also in the diligent use of the other means of grace, particularly in the participation of the Lord's Supper?

In the third place, you engaged to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of your life." Have you fulfilled this part of your engagement? What the commandments of God are, you well know. Many of those which forbid the commission of sin, I have touched upon in the former part of this discourse. With regard to those commandments which enjoin religious dispositions and religious duties, ask your own consciences whether you love and serve God as you ought to do. Whether you treat his name with reverence, never taking it in vain, or in any way profaning it. Consider, whether you keep holy the Lord's day; whether you are dutiful and obedient to parents, and to magistrates, and

all that are in authority; whether you are careful to keep your hands from picking and stealing, your tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering; whether you are contented in that state of life, in which the providence of God has placed you. If you live in the wilful neglect of any of God's commandments; if you are in the habit of swearing; in the habit of neglecting church, and the duties of the Lord's day; if you are guilty of reviling, or of evil speaking, or of any other sin against the divine law; you have broken your baptismal vow, have gone back from your baptismal engagements, and have become exposed to the curse which is threatened to all those who wilfully "go astray from the commandments of God."

Consider well, my friends, what has been said. Revolve it again and again in your minds, and beseech God to bring it home to your hearts and consciences. You sometimes probably hear and read of men's being converted, or unconverted, being renewed or unrenewed, and many like expressions. All these expressions come, in fact, to the same thing; and all questions respecting them are answered by the answer to the inquiry, which I have endeavoured to press upon you. Are you sincerely endeavouring to fulfil your baptismal vow, or are you living in neglect of it? If you are habitually mindful of your baptismal covenant, and wish, and

sincerely try to live according to it, with
 earnest prayer for God's grace to enable you
 to do so, you are converted, are renewed,
 are in a state of grace, in a state of justifica-
 tion; but if you habitually neglect it, or have
 wilfully drawn back, and continue to draw
 back from it, you are unrenewed, and in a
 state of condemnation. ~~and if you~~
 and if you faithfully keep to the engagements
 into which you entered at the font, if you
 endeavour to renounce the sins of the devil,
 the world and the flesh; if you sincerely
 believe all the articles of the Christian faith;
 even though your faith be weak; and if it is
 the desire and purpose of your heart to keep
 God's holy will and commandments, and to
 walk in the same all the days of your life,
 even though your obedience is marked with
 much imperfection; if, I say, this is the case,
 then, happy are ye. Your interest in the
 privileges conferred at baptism remains firm.
 Humbly beg God to keep you in this state,
 and seek for the confirmation and increase of
 all spiritual blessings, by devoutly partaking
 of the table of the Lord. But if, on the other
 hand, you unhappily have habitually broken,
 and are still living in the neglect of your
 baptismal vow, I beseech you, before it is
 too late, to turn back to God, and to the
 Lord. By the term conversion, I mean a turning
 from sin to God, the turning from the evil of our doings,
 the turning away from wickedness, and doing that which
 is lawful and right.

too late, to think upon the dangerous condition you are in. You have forsaken the guide of your youth, and broken the covenant of your God. You have deserted the standard, under which you were enlisted to war; have drawn back from the engagements into which you had entered. Remember that they that draw back, forfeit the favour of Almighty God—his soul can have no pleasure in them—and that they that draw back, “draw back unto perdition¹.” Reflect upon the awful warning of the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “He that despised Moses’ law, died without mercy “under two or three witnesses: of how much “sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be “thought worthy, who hath trodden under “foot the Son of God, and hath counted the “blood of the covenant, wherewith he was “sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done “despite unto the Spirit of grace².” To this sore punishment, my friends, all those are exposed, who live in habitual and wilful neglect of their baptismal engagements. If you are of the number of such, let me entreat you, ere it is too late; to reflect upon the danger hanging over your heads. “Escape for your “life, for evil is before you.” Flee instantly from the wrath to come, and labour to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. And be-

¹ Heb. x. 39.² Heb. x. 28, 29.

cause through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without God, let us apply to him for grace and help in time of need. Let us say, "Turn thou us, "O good Lord, and so shall we be turned;" and let us implore Him to grant unto us the aid of the Holy Ghost to create in us a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us, to enable us for the future to keep steadily to our baptismal engagement, and to preserve us from again going back from it.

SERMON X

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

LUKE xxi. 19.

“This do in remembrance of me.”

A CHRISTIAN Pastor, anxious for the salvation of the souls committed to his charge, must be very desirous of seeing his people regular communicants at the Lord's table. He knows that nothing ought to keep them from it but absolute unfitness. He knows that if they are unfit for the Lord's Supper, they are unfit for heaven; and that if they are unfit for heaven, they are in constant danger of the condemnation of hell. He cannot, therefore, but be uneasy to see many—indeed to see *any*—of his flock, of mature years and understanding, in the habit of turning their backs upon that sacred rite, which was appointed for their spiritual sustenance.

¹ This Sermon is also printed as a Tract. price 3d.

With this impression on my mind, I wish now to address you on the subject of the Lord's Supper. In doing which, I shall speak, First, of the institution and nature of this sacrament; Secondly, of the obligation which we lie under to partake of it constantly; and Thirdly, of the qualifications necessary in order to partake of it worthily.

I. The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded in nearly the same terms by three of the Evangelists, and by St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians¹. The substance of them all is given in the Communion Service of our Church, in which we are reminded, that our Saviour Christ, in "the same night that he was betrayed, took bread; and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me. Likewise after supper he took the cup; and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of me."

From this account we find, that the Lord's Supper is to be looked upon as a memorial, or commemorative act. We are commanded

¹ Chap. xi. 23—25.

to eat the bread and drink the wine in "remembrance" of Christ; to put us in mind, or make us *remember*, that his body was broken or wounded upon the cross, and his blood poured forth for our sakes. And while it puts us in remembrance of these things, it ought to excite in us those affections, those emotions of heart, and especially that thankfulness, which such a wonderful instance of mercy deserves.

But though the Lord's Supper is to be regarded as a memorial or commemorative rite, yet if it were to be considered in this light *only*, it would hardly deserve to be called a sacrament. For a sacrament, as we are taught in the Church Catechism, is not only "an outward and visible sign of an inward" and spiritual grace given unto us," but also "a means whereby we receive that" grace, and a pledge" or token "to assure" us" that we do receive it. Now if the Lord's Supper were merely an act of remembrance, it would by no means come up to this definition of a sacrament; and accordingly it is the doctrine of our Church, that the Lord's Supper was instituted, not only for the continual remembrance of the "sacrifice of the" death of Christ, and of the benefits which "we receive thereby," but also as the means of conveying to the devout communicant the benefits which Christ's death was designed to procure; as "the means of strengthening

“and refreshing our souls, by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are” strengthened and refreshed by eating bread and drinking wine¹. “The cup of blessing which we bless,” says St. Paul, “is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” In compliance with this doctrine, the Lord’s Supper is spoken of in the first exhortation in the Communion Service, as being to us “spiritual food and sustenance;” and soon after, devout partakers of it are said “spiritually to eat the flesh of Christ, and to drink his blood; to dwell in Christ, and Christ in them; to be one with Christ, and Christ with them.” In the same sense, in the prayer immediately before the prayer of consecration, we intreat, that “we may so eat the flesh of Jesus Christ, and drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us.” And thus we ask in the prayer of consecration, that “we may be partakers of the body and blood of Christ.” All these expressions of spiritually eating the flesh and

¹ See *Waterland and Law*, if this volume should fall into the hands of any who have access to such authors.

² 1 Cor. x. 16.

drinking the blood of Christ, of dwelling in him and he in us, of being partakers of his body and blood, mean precisely the same thing. They are figurative modes of expressing our partaking in the benefits which Christ's death purchased for us; and these are, forgiveness of sins, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit. In the same sense are to be understood those strong expressions in the Church Catechism, which assert, that "the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper;" which mean nothing more than that the *faithful*, those, who, with hearty repentance and true faith receive the Lord's Supper, do verily and indeed partake of the benefits which the death of Christ purchased; the forgiveness of sin, and renewed strength, from the Spirit of holiness.

A sacrament, however, is said to be not only the means of imparting divine grace, but also a pledge or token to assure us that we receive it. It is usual among men to accompany, with some outward sign or token, the appointment to any dignity, or office, or possession; or the conclusion of any agreement or bargain. In this country, for instance, in several of the high offices of state, the appointment to, or relinquishing of them, is accompanied by the delivery or giving back of a seal, or wand, or staff: the conveyance of land is often completed by the conveyance of

the writings relating to it, or by taking bodily possession; or, to adopt a still more familiar illustration, when a farming servant is hired, it is customary to give a small piece of money as a pledge or earnest. And in a manner somewhat similar are the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper to be looked upon as an outward token, or pledge, or earnest, by the delivery of which by the hands of his minister, God conveys to the devout communicant the benefits which those symbols present.

These benefits, you will recollect, are spoken of as being received by the *faithful*, and by the faithful only. Thus while the 28th Article of our Church asserts, "that the body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Lord's Supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner; and the mean whereby it is received and eaten is faith:" the 29th says, "The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ."

II. From the foregoing account of the institution and nature of the Lord's Supper, the obligation to partake of it is sufficiently plain. We are enjoined to partake of it by Christ himself. "Do this," says he, "in REMEMBRANCE OF ME; DRINK YE ALL OF IT." If we refuse to communicate, we are guilty of disobedience to our Lord's autho-

rity, and of course expose ourselves to the penalty of disobedience. Why call ye him Lord, Lord, and do not the things that he says?

Reflect too upon the time at which our Saviour appointed this ordinance. It was in the "same night in which he was betrayed." At the time when he was upon the point of enduring the severest agony of mind and body; when he was just about to encounter the most cruel indignities, to be mocked and scourged, and spit upon, and at last to undergo a most painful death; and all for our sakes; then it was that he instituted this sacrament, in order to put us in remembrance of his sufferings. Certainly we cannot refuse to comply with this his last, his dying request, without being guilty of deep ingratitude. Had we been condemned to suffer death, and some friend had given himself to die in our stead, we should have felt *very* thankful to him. And if he had desired us to do something to put us in mind of his kindness, we should have felt bound by the strongest ties to comply with his request. Let us not be less thankful to him who died to save us from everlasting death; who when we were sinners, "gave his life a ransom for all."

Consider too that the Lord's Supper was intended to convey to us the benefits, which the death of Christ purchased for us, even

the forgiveness of sin, and the assistance of the Holy Ghost. If we had no sins to be forgiven, or if our own strength were sufficient to the performance of the divine will, yet still we could not neglect this sacrament, without being guilty of disobedience and ingratitude. But if we are laden with sins, and compassed about with infirmities—as, whether we feel and confess it or not, is indeed the case with every one of us—it surely concerns us in the highest degree to do what we can to procure to ourselves these inestimable benefits; and to refuse to partake of the Lord's Supper, is to act like a sick man, who throws from him the medicine by which he might be healed:—it is, in some measure, to invite and court our own condemnation.

Our Lord himself in his very remarkable discourse to the Jews in the 6th chapter of St. John says, “Except ye eat the flesh
“of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye
“have no life in you.” “If a man,” indeed, as our Church wisely and charitably teaches, “by reason of extremity of sickness, or by
“any other just impediment, do not receive
“the sacrament of Christ's body and blood,
“yet, if he do truly repent him of his sins,
“and stedfastly believe that Jesus Christ
“hath suffered death upon the cross for him,
“and shed his blood for his redemption,
“earnestly remembering the benefits he hath
“thereby, and giving him hearty thanks

“ therefore, he doth eat and drink the body
 “ and blood of our Saviour Christ profitably
 “ to his soul's health, although he do not
 “ receive the sacrament with his mouth¹.”
 But if a man, without such just impediment,
 wilfully refuses to partake of the body and
 blood of Christ in the way which Christ
 himself has appointed, he certainly acts as
 if he cared not for the strengthening and
 refreshing of his soul, or even for the soul's
 spiritual life.

III. But perhaps you acknowledge the
 obligation to communicate, but are afraid of
 communicating unworthily. Let us proceed
 then, in the third place, to consider the qua-
 lifications requisite in order to partake of the
 Lord's Supper. These qualifications com-
 prise nothing but what is necessary at every
 part of our life, whether we receive the Lord's
 Supper or not; nothing but what we en-
 gaged for at baptism; nothing but what is
 necessary to fit us for death. They may be
 comprised in two words, *faith* and *repent-*
ance. In the Church Catechism, in answer
 to the question, “ What is required of them
 “ who come to the Lord's Supper?” it is re-
 plied, “ To examine themselves whether they
 “ repent them truly of their former sins, sted-
 “ fastly purposing to lead a new life; have a
 “ lively faith in God's mercy, through Christ,

¹ Last Rubric in the Communion of the Sick.

“and a thankful remembrance of his death,
 “and be in charity with all men.” bold him
 Of the nature of repentance; none of you I
 hope are ignorant. It consists in real heart-
 felt sorrow for sin, together with a sincere
 steadfast resolution to walk for the future in
 newness of life; a resolution to do to the
 utmost of our power whatever is displeasing
 to God, and to live soberly, righteously, and
 godly in this present world. Faith is a real
 belief in the fundamental doctrines of the
 Gospel, particularly in that most fundamental
 doctrine, the death of Christ for the sins of
 the world; a belief, which is not the mere
 assent of the understanding, but the per-
 suasion of the heart, shewing itself to be
 living and active by the good fruits which it
 produces on the conduct; a faith in short
 which worketh by love. Of such a faith the
 natural consequence is *thankfulness*—“a
 “thankful remembrance of the death of
 “Christ.” For certainly a man, who really
 believes that when he was exposed to eternal
 death, the Son of God died to rescue him,
 will feel thankful for such a stupendous in-
 stance of loving kindness. The being in per-
 fect charity with all men, implies the har-
 bouring no ill will, a freedom from all desire
 of revenge, a readiness to forgive injuries,
 and to promote the welfare of all within our
 reach. This in fact may be considered as a
 part of repentance. The qualifications for

the Lord's Supper are mentioned rather more at length in the Communion Service. "The way and means thereto is first to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments, and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness, and confess yourselves to Almighty God with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbour, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make satisfaction according to the uttermost of your power for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand." And again, more shortly, thus; "Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord; repent you truly for your sins past, have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour, amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men." And what is there here which is not the bounden duty of every one of us, whether we receive the Lord's Supper or not? What is there here, which is not necessary to entitle us to the common privileges of Christianity? What is there here that can be neglected by any

one, who wishes to meet death with comfort? Those who have opportunity, do well, if before communicating they give more time than usual to prayer and self-examination; but the qualifications above mentioned comprise all that is absolutely requisite.

Many persons seem to entertain the mistaken and dangerous idea, that though a man is not fit for the sacrament, he yet may be in a state of acceptance with God, and his eternal interests safe. Believe me, my friends, it is, generally speaking, impossible for a person of mature years to be unfit to partake of the Lord's Supper, and at the same time fit for heaven. For in what does your unfitness for the sacrament consist? in the neglect of repentance? in a determination not to quit your sins? in an obstinate refusal to lead a new life? Alas! if this be so, you are in a most perilous situation, whether you receive the Lord's Supper or not. You are in a state of death, and eternal sufferings are hanging over your head. For you cannot hope for forgiveness without repentance, and if your sins are unforgiven, they will ruin you for ever. "Except ye repent, ye shall certainly perish." Or is it that you are wholly without faith? Is it that though you profess and call yourself a Christian, you really believe neither in God the Father, nor in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? If this be so, you are yet in your sins; for without

faith it is impossible to please God, and it is through faith in Christ alone that forgiveness is offered.

If however you tell me that you are heartily sorry for having offended God, and wish and intend to use your best endeavours to please him for the time to come; but that you fear that your sorrow for sin has not been deep enough, that your repentance is imperfect; if you say farther, that you really believe the great articles of the Christian religion, and are influenced in your conduct by this belief, but that your faith is weak, and not sufficiently vigorous and active; I should then exhort you to dismiss your fears, and to draw near to the table of your Lord in humble reliance upon the mercy of God. As long as we are in the body, we shall continue full of imperfections, and if none could partake of the Lord's Supper, but those whose faith and repentance are in every respect perfect, who could venture to approach it? We profess to come, "not trusting in our own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies;" we there confess "our manifold sins and wickedness," and acknowledge that "we are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under his table."

Or perhaps you apprehend, though your repentance be now sincere, that at some future period you may fall into sin. If none

were to receive the 'Lord's Supper but those who can be sure that they shall henceforward be perfectly free from sin, no one ought to receive it, for there is no man living that sinneth not. It is because we are continually exposed to temptation, and continually in need of having our souls strengthened and refreshed, that the Lord's Supper ought to be continually received. This sacrament was appointed, not for angels, not for glorified saints, but for *sinner*s; for sinners who are penitent, and wish to subdue their sins, although they expect not to subdue them entirely while they continue in the body.

Serious attention to what has been said of the qualifications requisite in order to partake of the Lord's Supper, ought to remove all the groundless obstacles which prevent men from communicating. I wish however particularly to address two descriptions of persons.

Many of you say that you are too *young* to communicate. But are you too young to *repent* and *believe*? Are you too young to fear and to serve God? too young to wish to go to heaven rather than to hell? Our church considers all who are old enough to be confirmed,—certainly all of the age of sixteen years¹,—as old enough also to receive the

¹ See the 112th Canon.

sacrament; and so they certainly are. If many young people are in the habit of neglecting the Lord's Supper, their bad example furnishes no excuse for you, and does not lessen your obligation. Do you think that because you are young, you need not think of these things, but may lightly follow your own wills and fancies, and that it will be soon enough to attend to religion when you are old? But you may not live to be old. You may be cut off in the beginning of life. If in the strength and confidence of youth you resolve to "walk in the ways of thine heart, "and the sight of thine eyes:—know thou, "that for all these things God will bring thee "into judgment¹." The Scriptures exhort you to attend to religion in the morning of your life: "Remember now thy Creator in "the days of thy youth²." God has a right to the best of your days, and the best of your strength. Do not then suffer the plea of youth to prevent you from complying with the dying *request*, the dying *command*, of your crucified Saviour. Do you say that youth is exposed to peculiar temptations? There is then the greater reason why you should seek for spiritual strength at the table of your Lord. You are old enough to understand what religion is; you are old enough to be sensible of the difference between being

Eccles. xi. 9.

² Eccles. xii. 1.

happy or miserable for ever. You have not then any excuse for neglecting the sacrament, and you cannot neglect it without being guilty of disobedience to Christ.

Again: women of the poorer class, when they have families of children, too generally make this circumstance a pretext for absenting themselves from the Lord's table. They say that their children burden them with cares, fret and ruffle their temper, and thus render them unfit for the sacrament. But do your families prevent you from *repenting* and *believing*? If you repent and believe, you are fit to come. Your families do in fact furnish an additional motive to you for being religious, and ought to make you anxious to draw down God's blessing both upon yourselves and upon them. If they have been to you an occasion of sin, you must repent of such sin, and strive against it for the time to come; and that you may strive successfully, seek for spiritual strength at the Lord's table. Irritation of temper, and anxiety or carefulness of mind are to be regarded as marks of human weakness, and must be prayed against, and striven against. To suffer ~~them~~ to keep you from the Lord's table, is as if a sick man should make his sickness an excuse for refusing to apply to the physician. In short, you are either fit to come to the

Lord's table, or unfit. If fit, you have nothing to keep you from it. If unfit, you are living in an unchristian state, a state of condemnation. And can you quietly make up your mind to continue in a state of condemnation until you have ceased to have children, or until your families are grown up? The Scriptures represent your children as a blessing. Do not make them a pretext for disobeying God; for neglecting your salvation.

Finally, let me beg of you all to believe that it cannot be wise or safe to live in the neglect of an institution of Christ. Remember that you are bound to partake of the Lord's Supper, because Jesus Christ has commanded it; because you act most unthankfully if you neglect it; because of the spiritual benefits which it is intended to convey. Remember that nothing is necessary to prepare you for this ordinance but faith and repentance; and that nothing, generally speaking, ought to keep you from it, but what, if persisted in, will keep you out of heaven. If you profess and call yourselves Christians, do not slight the Christian sacraments. If you believe that Christ died upon the cross for your sins, do not neglect to commemorate his death in the way which he himself appointed. If you acknowledge Christ as your master—if you call him Lord,

Lord, refuse not to do the things that he says¹

¹ Among the many excellent treatises on the Lord's Supper, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, I hardly know to which to give the preference. Perhaps the "Short Introduction to the Lord's Supper," by the apostolical Bishop Wilson, is altogether the most useful. Waldo's "Essay on the Holy Sacrament" is written with great judgment and piety, and the remarks on the Communion Service are excellent. Bishop Gibson's little book on this subject bears marks of the strong sense, learning, and pastoral fidelity of its author. Archbishop Synge's "Answer to all Excuses for not coming to the Holy Sacrament," and Bishop Fleetwood's "Reasonable Communion," are both written with great clearness, and are particularly calculated for removing the doubts of scrupulous persons.

SERMON XI.

THE CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD.

1 Cor. iv. 1.

“ Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”

Even among men who profess and call themselves Christians, there are at all times too many who require to be instructed in the religion which they profess; and yet more, who stand in need of exhortation, admonition, and reproof. From whom shall they receive such instruction, and admonition, but from the ministers of God? “How shall they hear without a preacher?” Public worship too appears to tend greatly to the promotion of the glory of God, and of the edification of man; and the Christian sacraments are acknowledged to be generally necessary to salvation. The proper celebration of public worship, however, requires the presence of some person regularly appointed to lead and direct the devotions of the people; and the

sacraments, having been ordained by Christ himself, must be administered by men duly authorized by him. From such considerations may be inferred the necessity of the office of the Priesthood.

From the earliest ages, there appear to have been priests appointed to minister for the people in holy things. For some time indeed the office was held by the head of each tribe or family, or annexed to the dignity of king; thus Melchisedec, the king of Salem, was also priest of the Most High God. But whatever description of men was invested with it, the office appears to have extended over the whole world, so that as there has seldom been found a people without some religion, there has rarely existed any appearance of religion, without a distinct order of men set apart for its service, set apart "to minister in the things pertaining to God." Indeed such an order of men seems absolutely essential to any public exercise of religion.

When the Almighty chose to himself a peculiar people to be the depositaries of the truth, he set apart the whole tribe of Levi to minister in holy things, investing with the high office of the priesthood Aaron and his sons. And our blessed Lord, when founding his Church, against which the gates of hell will never prevail, ordained his Apostles to bear chief authority; and in addition to them appointed other seventy also, to teach and

preach the Gospel of salvation. And now that his religion is established in great part of the known world, there does not appear to be less occasion for a distinct order of men to preach the Gospel to the people; to assist them in the interpretation of the Scriptures; to lead and direct public worship; and, above all, to admit members into the Church by Baptism; and after they are thus admitted to administer to them spiritual sustenance in the Lord's Supper: to act, in short, "as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

But who are they who are to be considered as invested with this sacred character? Who are to be regarded as the ministers and priests of the Christian dispensation? Can we suppose that any man, who, without any authority but his own, sets up himself as a preacher of the Gospel, is to be regarded as the minister of Christ? When Jeroboam caused the fatal schism in the Church of the Jews, and made priests of the lowest of the people¹, were they to be regarded in the same light with the priests of God's appointment? And now, when any man, actuated whether by zeal, or personal vanity, or by any other motives, without any regular ordination, constitutes himself a preacher and teacher, is he immediately to be regarded as

¹ 1 Kings xii. 31.

a minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God? Has any one, who chooses, power to administer the sacraments, and to guide the public devotions of the people? I am persuaded, that you all acknowledge the force of the apostolical rule: "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron¹." Many of the self-constituted teachers are, I doubt not, men of sincere piety; but piety alone does not give them a right to take upon them this holy office. Personal piety and excellent qualifications of every description were in our Saviour in the highest degree; for in him was no spot of sin, and the Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto him²; but even he did not enter upon his ministry until he was outwardly appointed to it. "Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, 'Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee³.'" Men may believe that they have an inward call, but that does not give them a right to exercise the office of the priesthood, unless it be accompanied either by the power of working miracles, or by an outward appointment and ordination. The power of working miracles has long since ceased to be conferred on men. An outward appointment or ordination appears then to be necessary

¹ Heb. v. 4.² John iij. 34.³ Heb. v. 5.

to constitute a minister of Christ, an ambassador and messenger of God ; for “ how shall they preach except they be *sent*¹ ? ” The question then is, What kind of appointment is valid ? The Church of England maintains, that ordination by bishops is most agreeable to the practice of the Apostles, and to that of the Churches which they established ; and that by means of such ordination, the office of the priesthood has been delivered down in succession from the times of the Apostles, indeed from Christ himself.

Let me request your attention to the following considerations.

When our Lord gave his commission to the Apostles, he said, “ As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained². ” The particular office on which they were sent by him was, to preach the Gospel to all people ; to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost : and to administer the Eucharist. Our Saviour adds in another place, “ And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world³. ” Does not this promise of our Lord imply the necessity of a *continued suc-*

¹ Rom. x. 15.

² John xx. 21, 23.

³ Matt. xxviii. 20.

cession in the ministry? The Apostles themselves in the course of nature, could not very long survive their divine Master; “they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” This promise of Christ’s presence therefore was made, not to them alone, but to them and their successors in the ministry to the end of time. So again; “he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me¹.” This is not to be understood of the Apostles alone, but also of their successors in after-ages.

Let us now consider in what manner the succession was continued. “As my Father hath sent me,” says our Lord, “even so send I you.” The power which he himself had to send labourers into the vineyard, that power he gave to his Apostles. And as Christ appointed them, even so they appointed or ordained other faithful men, to direct and govern the Churches which they founded, and also to ordain men to the work of the ministry. Thus we find St. Paul, who had himself in the exercise of his apostleship ordained elders in every city, left Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, with powers similar to those exercised by bishops now.

We dispute not about the precise meaning of the words elder, (or presbyter), or bishop, as they occur in the Epistles addressed to

¹ Luke x. 16.

these holy men. What we maintain from these Epistles is, that Timothy and Titus received from St. Paul the office and power of a bishop; the power to ordain, and to bear spiritual authority in the Church of Christ. Timothy, for instance, “is admonished to lay hands suddenly on no man; therefore, he had power to ordain; and he is likewise admonished not to receive an accusation against an elder or presbyter but before two or three witnesses; therefore he had a judicial authority over that order. Directions are given with respect to the deacons of the same Church; therefore, in the first Church of the Ephesians there was a bishop, with elders, (or presbyters,) and deacons under him¹.”

From the early history of the Church, and from the writings of the primitive fathers, we find that the same manner of ordination generally prevailed immediately after the times of the Apostles: and it seems to be clear, that for fifteen hundred years after Christ, with only one or two accidental and trifling exceptions, there was no Christian Church without a bishop, and that holy orders have been handed down by episcopal ordination to the present time.

If however the ministers of the Church of England are well and rightly ordained, then

¹ Jones's Essay on the Church.

they are *ministers of Christ*, and the various passages in the New Testament, relating to the ministers of Christ, are applicable to the clergy of our Church. And if this be so, they not only may, but *ought* to say to the people committed to their spiritual care, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" they may and ought to say, "Obey them that have" spiritual "rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account;" they then have a right, though with all humility and self abasement, to apply to themselves the words of Christ, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world: he that despiseth you, despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." As men, in our personal character and deportment, we can hardly be too humble. The sense of the nature of our office, and of the awful responsibility attached to it, increases this feeling of self-abasement, and induces us to exclaim, Lord, who is sufficient for these things! But still we must not suffer an affected humility to prevent us from "magnifying our office," from asserting its dignity, its claim to attention and respect.

My friends, let me beg of you to consider well what has been said. I speak not now of those who have been brought up as dis-

senters from their youth ; but I address you as members of the Church of England, that Church which takes care of you from the cradle to the grave ; which baptizes you in infancy ; which confirms you when arrived at years of discretion ; which unites husband and wife in wedlock ; which ministers to you in sickness ; and which attends you with prayers and holy offices to the mansions of the dead. As such you were long since taught to submit in spiritual things to your *spiritual pastor*—the clergyman of the parish in which you reside—and must recollect, that the sacred office which he bears has a claim to your respect on the authority of Christ himself. The obedience which you owe to Christ requires you to be present at the public ministrations of your *spiritual pastor*, and to receive with attention and respect the exhortations, the admonitions, and even the reproofs, which in the execution of his office, and at the peril of his own soul, he feels it right to address to you.

There are among you but very few dissenters ; and I trust that none of you will be seduced to desert your regular minister for any self-constituted teacher. But, by way of caution, suffer me to remind you, that if what has been above said be true, you cannot thus desert him, without being guilty of sin.

No man of right feeling will quit the reli-

gion and worship of his forefathers, the religion in which he has been born, and baptized, and brought up, unless he is satisfied upon thorough conviction, after a long and careful inquiry, that its terms of communion are unlawful. As good citizens too, you know that the Church of England is part of the Constitution of your country. The laws of the land, it is true, give every kind allowance to scrupulous consciences; but the acts of toleration and indulgence are exceptions to a general rule; and the religion which you profess is the established *national* religion, which even on this account ought not to be changed or quitted without reasons of great weight. This however I say by the bye. We claim respect to our office on still higher grounds—from the obedience which you owe to Christ. Respect I say to our *office*; for we ask no respect *as men*, beyond what our personal characters may be fairly entitled to. We acknowledge, that though invested with so high a commission, we are men of like passions with you; we acknowledge that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels¹”; that we are exposed to the common weaknesses and sins of our corrupted nature. Doubtless, we ought to strive to be examples of holiness; and the knowledge that our faults will do injury to the cause of religion,

will give occasion to the enemies of the Lord and of his Church to blaspheme and speak reproachfully, furnishes to us a strong additional motive for walking circumspectly. Still our personal defects and failings do not set our flocks at liberty to treat with neglect or contempt the office which we bear¹. And as in deserting your regular minister you would be guilty of disobedience to Christ, whose authority he bears, so also would you be guilty of the sin of schism.

The nature of the sin of *Schism* is, I fear, in these days of laxity of principle, but little considered or understood. We pray indeed in the Litany, to be delivered "from heresy and schism," but the spirit of the times we

¹ The 26th Article of our Church says, "Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministration of the word and sacraments; yet forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving of the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished, from such as by faith and rightly do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men. Nevertheless it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed."

live in seems disposed to regard them as no sins, no evils at all. Schism however is represented in a very different light in the holy Scriptures. The word *schism* means division—a division, a separation in the Church of Christ; a breach of that unity, that oneness, which our Lord and his Apostles so earnestly inculcate. In the affectionate and pathetic prayer of his Church, our Lord says, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be *one*, as we are.—Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me¹.”

Such was the earnest supplication, which our Lord offered up to God the Father for the peace and unity of his Church. The Church, we know, is repeatedly styled the body of Christ, and in the passage just quoted you see how anxious he was that his mystical body should not be rent, and divided, and torn asunder by *schisms*, or divisions. The Apostles earnestly laboured to promote this object of the prayers and wishes of their divine Master. They endeavoured to impress upon their converts the necessity of

¹ John xvii. 11. 20, 21.

harmony and peace and unity; and to prevent those divisions and dissensions in religion, which human passions and prejudices were likely to occasion. Such divisions appear to have prevailed to a great degree in the Church of Corinth, where the people ranged themselves some under one teacher, some under another, as their fancy led them. St. Paul anxiously warns them, that such divisions were directly contrary to the spirit of true religion, and were the result of human passions, and of a worldly frame of mind. "Ye are yet carnal," says he, "for whereas "there is among you envying, and strife, and "divisions," (or schisms,) "are ye not carnal: "and walk as men?" (as mere sinful men, rather than as real Christians?) "For while "one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am "of Apollos; are ye not carnal¹?" In the same spirit he had addressed them a little before, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by "the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye "all speak the same thing, and that there be "no divisions among you; but that ye be "perfectly joined together, in the same mind "and in the same judgment²." So anxious was he to prevent such divisions, that those who occasioned them were to be marked by their fellow Christians as disturbers of the public peace of the Church, and their com-

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4.² 1 Cor. i. 10.

pany and society to be avoided. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them¹." It is, I trust, unnecessary to lay before you the many other passages to the same purport which occur in the Epistles of the Apostles; I must, however be permitted to direct your attention to part of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where, after exhorting them to endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," St. Paul goes on to enforce this exhortation by saying, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all²." "How many *ones* are here," says an old writer, "to move the people of God to be one! how unnatural is it for members of the same body to be divided one from the other! All the members of the Church, the mystical body of Christ, have one and the same spirit. Why then should they not have one heart and one way, when they are taught and led by one Spirit? There is one Lord, and that is the Lord Christ, whom we all worship and serve. And shall fellow servants differ,

¹ Rom. xvi. 17.² Ephes. iv. 3, &c.

“that have the same Lord? If there be but
 “one faith, why should we not be united
 “therein in one judgment? There is one
 “baptism, and shall we by our discords and
 “divisions, unbaptize ourselves, as it were,
 “by dividing from that body, into which we
 “were baptized? Shall not we be one that
 “have one God? Shall he be over us, and
 “through us, and in us all, and should not
 “this be an argument to preserve peace and
 union among us?” In short, to adopt the
 words of another writer¹, who is so much ve-
 nerated by many of the dissenters themselves,
 “A true Christian, that hateth fornication,
 “drunkenness, lying, perjury, because they
 “are forbidden in the word of God, will hate
 “divisions also, when he well observeth how
 “frequently and vehemently they are for-
 “bidden, and concord highly commended and
 “commanded.”

The evil of schism appears farther from
 the evil root from which it springs. I would
 not willingly give offence to any, and allow
 that it sometimes proceeds from a sincere
 though mistaken piety: too often however it
 has its origin in that spirit of pride, and self-
 conceit, which is so natural to sinful man;
 that spirit which produces sedition and rebel-
 lions in the State, and dissension and schism
 in the Church. Religion inculcates humi-

¹ Baxter.

ivy, and meekness, and patience; a peaceable obedience to the laws and established government; and a dutiful submission in spiritual things to spiritual pastors. Pride tells a man not to submit to any body; and self-conceit makes him think himself too wise to learn or be directed. United they dispose him to find fault with the established religion and government, and nourish in his bosom a proud factious spirit of insubordination. I trust that you will guard against this evil spirit. I speak not these things to reprove you, but, as my beloved sons, I warn you.

Schism then appears to be sinful in itself, and sinful in the origin from which it springs. It is also too likely to lead you into HERESY, or false doctrine. The ministers of the Church of England are pledged and bound to teach no doctrines at variance with those which are contained in her Liturgy and Articles—contained in them as being the sense of Holy Scripture. The frequenters of a dissenting meeting-house have seldom a similar security, and are liable to be led wherever the preacher chooses to carry them. Many of the dissenters pride themselves upon the unrestrained licence of their opinions. Some of them represent our Saviour to have been a mere man, and deny that his death made atonement for sin. And there are, I believe, dissenting teachers in these evil days of rebuke and blasphemy, who even dispute the

divine authority of the Scriptures. A man possessed of natural talents and readiness of tongue may easily make the worse appear the better reason, can easily give a specious colouring to erroneous doctrines, and “by fair words deceive the hearts of the simple. Men who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, cannot generally be supposed to be possessed of learning and ability sufficient to detect the errors and false reasoning of a man fluent in speech, and able to pervert the words of Scripture, so as to give a seeming support to what he says. Hence, those who go to dissenting meetings are in danger of being carried about with every wind of doctrine, till at length, wearied and puzzled by the many opposite opinions presented to them, they end in doubt, and quit religion altogether. A man who keeps stedfast to the form of sound words, which he has been taught; who lives in quiet submission to the Church in which he has been baptized and brought up, is in little danger of being led into error; and if he should err, much allowance is to be made for him. But a man who frequents schismatical conventicles, runs himself wilfully into danger; and if he should be led away either by irregular zeal, or “ cunning craftiness,” he has no one to blame but himself. His departure from the faith is his own work. His having become a heretic or an unbeliever is to be imputed to his own

love of irregularity, his own itching ears. "The time will come," says St. Paul, "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears¹."

My friends, think on these things. If you go at all to dissenting meetings—even though you may also go to church—If I say you go *at all* to dissenting meetings, you do by so doing encourage dissent and schism; you expose yourself to the danger of being led into false doctrine or heresy; you act undutifully towards that Church in which you have been baptized, and towards the spiritual pastor, whom you ought to regard as "the minister of Christ, and steward of the mysteries of God." Be on your guard therefore against irregular teachers, who may unawares creep in; mark them which cause divisions and schism in the Church, and avoid them; "hold fast the form of sound words," in which you have been instructed from your youth; and endeavour quietly "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

SERMON XII

HOLINESS THE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

Eph. iv. 24.

“That ye put on the new man, which after God is created
in righteousness and true holiness.”

It appears from the whole tenor of the Scriptures, that the advancement of real practical holiness—the formation of good dispositions and conduct, and the correction of such as are bad—is the great object of religious instruction. This is strongly asserted by St. Paul, in that passage of the Epistle to the Ephesians, of which the text forms the conclusion. “Ye,” says he, “have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and

“true holiness¹.” Accordingly, if we would give correct notions of the Christian religion; if we would teach “the truth as it is in Jesus;” we must impress upon our hearers the necessity of getting the better of their corruptions and sins, and of acquiring the opposite virtues and graces of character; in one word, the necessity of becoming *holy*.

Holiness consists in such a conformity to the will and nature of God as is attainable by man. Its principal seat is in the heart and affections;—we must be renewed, says St. Paul, in the spirit of our mind,—where it shows itself in loving God and what he loves, and consequently in hating what he hates. Holiness, as it regards the general conduct, consists in “ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well²,” or, according to that comprehensive passage in the Epistle to Titus, in “denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts,” and living “soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;” in avoiding all iniquity, and being zealous of good works³; not only *doing* good works, but being *zealous* of them, doing them with *zeal*, with readiness and pleasure. It implies a constant and willing endeavour to do whatever we ought to do, and to leave undone whatever we ought not to do; a disposition to be guided in thought, word, and deed, entirely by the will of God.

¹ Eph. iv. 20—24.

² Isaiah i. 16, 17.

³ Tit. ii. 12.

174 *Holiness the design of Christianity.*

The advancement of holiness appears to have been made by our gracious Creator the great object, both of the dispensations of his providence, and also of his supernatural revelations. “Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord “your God am holy¹,” is the lesson which he has been continually enforcing upon his creatures.

When he was pleased to separate a particular family from the rest of mankind, it was that they might be a peculiar people, a *holy* nation; that among them might be maintained a *holy* worship; and that to them might be committed those oracles of God, which contain the criterion and rule of *holiness*. The moral laws which he gave to them were all designed to enforce *holiness*; and their many ceremonial observances were intended to keep them holy and undefiled, and separate from the sinful nations around them. They were intended to remind them constantly of the holy nature of God, of the holiness, which he required in his worshippers, and to point forward to the great Fulfiller of all holiness, who was to come into the world.

“The law,” however, “made nothing perfect².” Its efficacy in producing practical holiness was comparatively small. But, “what “the law could not do, in that it was weak “through the flesh³,” too weak effectually to

¹ Lev. xix. 2.

² Heb. vii. 19.

³ Rom. viii. 3.

subdue the corruption, the headstrong lusts and passions of the nature of man.—“the bringing in of a better hope¹,”—that is, the Christian dispensation, accomplished in a far greater degree. Of that dispensation, *holiness* was the great end and intention; it is the object of all its promises, and of all its threatenings. Throughout the whole of our Saviour’s wonderful ministry for the restoration of man; in his life and in his death, in his resurrection and in his ascension, the advancement of holiness among men was the end which he constantly had in view. It was this that was the object of his excellent moral precepts, of his divine discourses, of his instructive parables; and the miracles which he wrought, were not only so many proofs that his mission was divine, that he indeed came forth from God, but many, if not all of them, had also a particular moral intention, and were designed for the recommendation of some right action or feeling, or for the correction of such as were evil. And in the whole of his life, he was a perfect pattern of every kind and branch of holiness: thus “leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps²,” and walk continually “in all holy conversation and godliness³.” His piety and devotion to God, his self-denial, his humility and meekness, his universal benevo-

Heb. vii. 29. ² 1. Pet. ii. 21. ³ 2. Pet. iii. 11.

lence, and "readiness to do good" both to the bodies and souls of men, were "so many features of his holy character, which those who wish to be partakers of his resurrection must endeavour to imitate. And as every part of the life of our Redeemer was thus calculated to advance holiness among men, so most signally was the same great object promoted by his death. The death of Christ for the sins of the world, placed in the most striking point of view both the awful justice, and the mercy of God, his hatred of sin, and his readiness to forgive sinners. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life¹;" and he so hated sin, that the blood of his dear Son was shed to wash away its guilt.

The moral or practical effects which this wonderful dispensation of "mercy and truth," of "righteousness and peace²," ought to produce upon our hearts and conduct, the tendency which it has to promote holiness, are almost self-evident. They are earnestly and affectionately set forth by the Apostles in a variety of passages. Christ "died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again³." Being

¹ John iii. 16. ² Ps. lxxxv. 10. ³ 2 Cor. v. 15.

thus, “bought with a price¹,”—being “not
 “redeemed, with corruptible things, as silver
 “and gold,—but with the precious blood of
 “Christ²,” we should consider, that we “are
 “no longer our own,” are no longer at liberty
 to follow our own corrupt wills, but belong
 unto him who has thus bought us, and should
 consequently “glorify God in our body and
 “in our spirit which are God’s³.” “Know-
 “ing this,” says St. Paul in another place,
 “that our old man is crucified with him, that
 “the body of sin might be destroyed, that
 “henceforth we should not serve sin⁴.” That
 is, the death of Christ furnishes the most pre-
 vailing motive for forsaking those sins to
 which by our unrenewed nature, here called
 the old man, we are inclined; we should be
 no more capable of committing sin than a
 man actually dead. St. Peter, to whom I
 have already referred, uses similar language
 to St. Paul: “Christ also hath once suffered
 “for sins, the just for the unjust”—and why?
 —“that he might bring us to God⁵,” that he
 might make us *holy*. And again, “who his
 “own self bare our sins in his own body on
 “the tree”—and for what end?—“that we
 “being dead to sins, should live unto righte-
 “ousness⁶.”

In like manner does the great doctrine of

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

² 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

³ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

⁴ Rom. vi. 6.

⁵ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

the resurrection of Christ, tend to advance practical holiness. "To you first," says St. Peter to the Jews, "God having raised up "his son Jesus, sent him to bless you"—but how?—"in turning away every one of you "from his iniquities¹." St. Paul, in a variety of passages, points out and insists on the practical efficacy—the moral tendency—of the resurrection of Christ. When in his Epistle to the Philippians he expresses his wish to know the power of Christ's resurrection², as well as "the fellowship of his sufferings;" his meaning appears to be, that a lively belief in the resurrection of Christ, aided by the influence of the Spirit, might effectually excite him to a higher degree of holiness. So again he says in the Epistle to the Romans, "therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was "raised up from the dead by the glory of the "Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life³." As Christ rose from death to life, so should we rise from that state of sin in which we are by nature, but to which we are now supposed to have died, to that holiness of living which Christianity requires, and to which it furnishes such powerful inducement.

The same practical lesson is again enforced by St. Paul, from the "ascension" of our

¹ Acts iii. 26.² Phil. iii. 10.³ Rom. vi. 4.

Lord, and his sitting at the right hand of God. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God ¹.”

And, that the awful doctrine of Christ's coming again to judgment was intended to promote holiness of living, is so plain, that the most thoughtless must immediately perceive it. For when we are told that “God shall bring every thing into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil ²,”—when we are assured that our Lord will sit on the throne of his glory, and will judge every man according to his works; and that then those who have done evil will go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal ³; both our hopes and our fears must be most powerfully acted upon, and must both lead us to endeavour to acquire such a disposition of heart, and to adopt such a line of conduct, as will enable us, through faith in the atonement, to look forward to that awful judgment without dismay.

The same course of argument might be carried much farther, but I trust that the observations which I have made are sufficient to convince you, that the advancement of

¹ Col. iii. 1—3.

² Eccles. xii. 4.

³ Matt. xxv.

real practical holiness is the main design of Christianity, and of all its fundamental doctrines; and is impressed upon our consciences by all the leading circumstances in the life and death of Christ, by his humiliation and his glorification. Accordingly, the Apostle assures us in that noble passage which contains the sum and substance of Christianity, and which can hardly be too often repeated, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity”—might rescue us from the power and dominion of sin—“and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works¹.” And you must recollect, that the passage from which my text is taken, tells us, that the true Christian doctrine, “the truth as it is in Jesus,” is that which admonishes us to “put off the old man,” that is to avoid, to forsake, to get rid of, the sins to which by nature we are inclined, and “to put on the new man”—to acquire the virtues, the temper, and disposition of a real Christian. Of such affections, the

¹ Titus ii. 11—14.

most important are THE LOVE OF GOD¹, which is styled by our Lord the first and great commandment; and as second and like unto it, THE LOVE OF MAN². It is worth your while to turn to the chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians³ from which the text is taken, and to see what particular virtues St. Paul there thought it expedient especially to inculcate, as marks or instances of Christian *holiness*, of having put off the old man and put on the new. They are; a sacred regard to truth⁴ in our intercourse with each other; strict honesty⁵, and industry, and a readiness to administer to the wants of others; chastity and purity in heart and in language; the due restraint of anger⁶, and the acquiring of the graces of humility⁷, meekness, gentleness, and a willingness to forgive injuries⁸. In the following chapter, he again enforces some of the same virtues, and then goes on particularly to recommend attention to all the relative duties of life, together with fervency in prayer, and the use of the other means of grace. In short, we find from the language of St. Paul himself, that “putting off the old man” and “putting on the new,” means nothing more nor less, than the ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well; the getting rid of bad

¹ Serm. XIII.

² Serm. XVIII.

³ Eph. iv. latter part.

⁴ Serm. XIX.

⁵ Serm. XX.

⁶ Serm. XXI.

⁷ Serm. XVII.

⁸ Serm. XXII.

182 *Holiness the design of Christianity.*

dispositions of heart, and the acquiring of such as are good; it means, in short, the becoming *holy*. *As*

And, that this is not only our duty, but in every point of view our interest: that the becoming *holy* is the most effectual way of becoming *happy*, a little serious reflection will, I trust, convince you. Holiness is essential to happiness, both in this world and the next¹. Holiness, as was said, consists in conformity to the will of God. Now since that will is the result of infinite wisdom, goodness, and truth, and supported by infinite power, it seems to stand to reason that conformity to that will must be the surest source of happiness, and that any opposition to it must be attended with uneasiness and pain. And your own observation and experience—observation of what occurs in the world around you, experience of what passes in your own breast,—will tell you that most of the unhappiness and misery among men is occasioned by their unruly wills, their headstrong appetites, their ungoverned passions. Where the will is submitted to the will of God, and the appetites and passions are guided by his laws, peace and tranquillity of mind are the happy result. And if holiness is essential to happiness here, it is still more essential to happiness hereafter. Without

¹ Heb. xii. 14.

holiness no man shall see the Lord¹. An unholy soul will not be admitted into heaven, and, indeed, could not be happy if it was admitted there; for it would have no enjoyment, no taste for that nearness and likeness to God, which constitute the happiness of that blessed place; no feeling in common with the holy fellowship, the spirits of just men made perfect which are there assembled. From all that we can learn of the nature of the blessedness of heaven, it is plain, that in order to be fit for it, in order to be able to enjoy it, a particular *character* must be acquired during our continuance on earth, and that character is the character of *holiness*.

Let the attainment of holiness then, my friends, the *putting on of the new man*, be the great object of our endeavour, and of our prayers. Remember, that, “this is the will of God, even your sanctification² ;” and that, according to the passage just now quoted, without holiness no man shall see the Lord. Unless we are in some measure *holy*, and have the seeds and principles of holiness planted within us, we shall not, we *cannot*, go to heaven. That we should at once attain it, we cannot indeed hope. The habit of holiness, like other habits, is acquired, generally speaking, by degrees, and step by step. And that we should ever literally perfect “holiness in the fear of God²,” we can hardly

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 3.

² 2 Cor. vii. 1.

expect while we remain in this world. In many things we offend all, and shall too probably go on to offend, so long as the "corruptible body" continues to "press down the soul." But still, we must strive to acquire higher degrees of holiness; must strive to "abound continually more and more¹;" to "press" on "toward the mark²," to go on toward perfection; humbly lamenting our manifold failings, and imploring pardon for them through the merits of our Redeemer.

It is hardly necessary to state, that our holiness must be founded and built upon faith in Christ. This has been implied, and more than implied, through the whole of this discourse. If our hearts are purified, they are purified "through faith³;" if our souls are sanctified, they are sanctified through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. No religion but the religion of Christ furnishes motives sufficiently powerful for the production of real sanctification. One of the principal outward means of producing holiness is the study of the Scriptures. Our Lord, in his prayer for his chosen followers, says, "sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth⁴." The word of God points out to us all the parts and branches of holiness, and the means by which we may acquire it; it is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 1.

² Phil. iii. 14.

³ Acts xv. 9.

⁴ John xvii. 17.

paths.¹ Let us therefore make the Scriptures our frequent study; let us read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them. The great author and giver of holiness is the blessed Spirit. His peculiar office it is to renew our corrupted nature, to purify our hearts and affections, and, in one word, to *sanctify* us, or make us holy. Let us seek his sanctifying influence by the diligent use of the means of grace; especially let us beg them of him with unwearied earnestness; “praying always,” says the Apostle in the same Epistle, “with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance².”

Thus through the use of prayer and of the other means of grace, may we be enabled to acquire that holiness of heart and of conduct, which is necessary to prepare us for heaven:—thus may we be assisted and sanctified; thus may we be more and more renewed in the spirit of our minds, and, in the full sense of the word, put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

THE PRAYER. (Collect for Christmas.)

Almighty God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him; Grant that we, being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

¹ Psalm cxix. 105.

² Eph. vi. 18.

SERMON XIII.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

MATT. xxii. 37, 38.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

AMONG all the right affections of the heart, all the various branches of the Christian temper, there is no one which better deserves, and more requires to be cultivated, than the love of God.

The love of God is styled by our Saviour in the text, “the first and great commandment.” *All* God’s commandments without exception, even those which are comparatively the least important, must be carefully observed by us, and cannot be wilfully neglected without the utmost danger. And, certainly, that which by our Lord himself is said to be the first and greatest of them all, must have the strongest claim to our attention.

In discoursing on the love of God, I shall, First, lay before you some of its effects or properties; by the consideration of which you will be enabled to judge, whether you are influenced by it or not. .

Secondly, I wish to show you *why, and how justly*, the love of God was termed the first and great commandment of the law.

I shall, Thirdly, direct you to the means of acquiring, or of increasing the love of God ;

And shall conclude by mentioning some of the advantages which result from the presence of this excellent principle in our hearts.

I. In speaking of the effects or properties of the love of God, we shall derive assistance from considering what are the effects and properties of the love which we bear to any earthly object.

Whatever we really love, will be much and often in our thoughts. Our minds recur to it naturally and without effort, and we find a sort of satisfaction in thinking upon it. The man, for instance, who loves money, will have his mind dwell much upon what he has already gained, and the means of gaining more. He who loves sensual pleasures, will have the idea of such pleasures constantly returning to his imagination. When we feel love for a fellow-creature, for some dear relation, or friend, who is as our own soul, we think of him much and often when absent, and feel satisfaction in his presence. His

mere presence, is a source of pleasure; and this is still farther increased by the communication of our thoughts, by *conversing* with him. And thus if we love God, we may be sure that he will be often in our mind. We shall frequently think of him; shall feel comfort in the idea that he "is not far from any one of us;" shall long to be admitted to his more immediate presence in heaven; shall take pleasure in speaking to him in the language of praise, thanksgiving, and prayer.

Is this the case, my friends, with us? One of the marks of the wicked man, given by the Psalmist, is, that "God is not in all his thoughts." Let us take care, that this passage do not apply to ourselves. Another feature in the character of the unbelievers is, that "they have not called upon God." Are we in the constant habit of *calling upon God*? Do we find it our comfort and delight to be permitted to open to him the desires of our hearts; to lay before him our wants and our sorrows; to implore his mercy, his protection, and support? If we do not love to call upon God in prayer, to hold this converse with him, we have reason to fear that we do not love God as we ought to do.

When we sincerely love any one, especially one of superior wisdom and power, we naturally fall into and adopt his likes and dislikes; we are anxious to learn his wishes, and careful, as far as we can, to comply with

them. 'And if we love God, we shall naturally love what he loves, and hate what he hates; we shall love that which is lawful and right, and, on the other hand, shall hate and avoid the thing that is evil; we shall be very desirous to learn his will, and very careful to perform it. "If ye love me," says our Saviour, "keep my commandments," and again, "he that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you!" And St. John, in the same manner, says, "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments²." But we shall not only keep them, keep them as of necessity because we are afraid of doing otherwise, but shall take pleasure in keeping them. We shall feel the truth of the Apostle's assertion in the latter part of the verse, "his commandments are not grievous." We shall not feel the observance of them as a painful burden, a burden from which we would gladly be relieved, but shall find it rather a source of delight. This was felt by David: "Lord, what love have I unto thy law! all the day long is my study in it. "Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage for ever;" for "they are the very joy of my heart." More to be desired

¹ John xiv, 15, 21. and xv, 14. ² 1 John v. 3,
Ps. cxix. 97 and 111.

“are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb¹.” There is not one of God’s commandments which is more earnestly enforced, than that which enjoins the love of our neighbour. Thus the same Apostle urges “this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.” If we love God, we shall love our fellow-men, as being originally made in his likeness, as being still the objects of his fatherly care, as being actually, or at least as capable of being, adopted in Christ, as his children. Accordingly, to be without the love of man, is a proof of the absence of the love of God. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen²?”

Let us examine ourselves, my friends, by the tests just mentioned; ever bearing in mind, that if we fail in the love of God, we fail in the chief part of our duty. Are we then careful to keep his commandments? Are we in the habit of doing his will, of doing *it willingly*, and with pleasure? In particular, do we love our fellow-creatures; and are

¹ Ps. xix. 10.

² 1 John iv. 20. See the whole of this beautiful and affectionate Epistle.

we ready to do them whatever kind offices are in our power, for God's sake? These are important questions, which demand our serious attention. God grant that our consciences may answer them satisfactorily.

Again; when we really love any person, we are zealous for his reputation, are anxious that he should be honoured among men, and are pained when we see him treated with disrespect. And thus, if we love God, we shall be very desirous of promoting his glory, of extending the influence of practical religion among all around us. We shall be anxious that *his name may be hallowed*, that *his kingdom may come*, and that *his will may be done* by men in general. We shall take pains to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify—not ourselves—but our Father which is in heaven. And, on the other hand, it will give us deep pain and grief of heart to see God dishonoured, his laws and will neglected and despised, to hear his name profaned, his authority and ordinances treated with contempt. On such occasions we shall be disposed to exclaim with David, “ Mine eyes gush out
“ with water; because men keep not thy
“ law¹.”

To give one instance more. We naturally feel an interest in every thing which serves

¹ Ps. cxix. 136.

to remind us of those we love. . . . Whatever belongs to them, whatever they valued, becomes to us an object of regard. . . . And thus if we love God; we shall love whatever is dedicated to his immediate honour and service, whatever is designed to preserve the remembrance of him fresh and strong in our minds. We shall love his *word*, his *law*, his *house*, his *worship*, his *sacraments*. We shall take pleasure in reading and studying his *word*, and shall prize it more highly "than gold or "precious stones." His *day* we shall look upon, not as a time of gloom and dejection, but shall esteem "the sabbath a delight, "the holy of the Lord, and honourable¹." His *house*, and the *worship* to which it is dedicated, we shall regard in the same spirit with David, who thus gave utterance to the feelings of his heart: "I was glad when they "said unto me, We will go into the house of "the Lord: one day in thy courts is better "than a thousand" spent elsewhere; "I had "rather be a door-keeper in the house of my "God than to dwell in the tents of ungodli- "ness."

His *sacraments* we shall esteem a sacred pledge of his love, designed and excellently calculated to keep up the flame of divine love in our hearts, and which can not, which *will* not, be neglected by any, in whose

souls the love of God is in any degree shed abroad.

This train of reflection, my friends, you may carry farther for yourselves. What I have said, may in some degree assist you in judging, how far you are influenced by the love of God.

II. Let us proceed in the second place to consider, *why, and how justly*, the love of God is styled "the first and great commandment."

It is so, because its immediate object is the first, and greatest, and best of beings, who accordingly has a better right and title to our love than any thing else. All earthly objects are in some degree imperfect. Many of them we may, and ought to love; our parents, for instance, our friends, our fellow-creatures generally. Even many inanimate objects may be valued to a certain degree; but nothing on earth must be allowed to hold as high a place in our regard as God; nothing must be allowed to come in competition with the obedience, the duty, the *love* which we owe to him. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me¹."

The love of God is also *the first and great commandment*, because it comprehends within

¹ Matt. x. 37. see also Luke xiv. 26.

itself all other commandments whatever. "This is the love of God," says the verse which I before quoted, "that we keep his commandments." Love is, in every sense, "the fulfilling of the law." As all the laws of the second table are briefly comprehended in this one saying, "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," so the love of God comprises within itself the whole compass of moral obligation.

The love of God, too, is *the first and great commandment*, not only because its object is so exalted, and its nature so comprehensive, but because it is the noblest and highest principle of obedience. "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and it is well when men are induced even by *fear* to wish and endeavour to work out their salvation. Where *fear*, however, is the only principle of obedience, obedience is constrained, and paid grudgingly, and as of necessity. The obedience, on the other hand, which proceeds from love is lively, vigorous, and cheerful; and, as the service of a willing mind, is doubly acceptable in the sight of God.

III. Let us now proceed, in the third place, to inquire into the means of acquiring or increasing the love of God. And here the first step must be, to root out of our hearts whatever is contrary to that love. We must endeavour to subdue all attachment to sin,

those sins especially to which by nature, or constitution, or habit, we are most inclined, —“ the sin which doth most easily beset us,” —in order that this divine principle may find our hearts empty, and ready to receive it. The love of the *world* is represented in the Scriptures as being peculiarly inconsistent with the love of God. “ If any man love “ the world,” says St. John, “ the love of the “ Father is not in him¹ :” and our Lord himself assures us, that we cannot serve, or at the same time supremely love, God and Mammon. We must strive, therefore, to conquer and keep down all undue love of the world, which we shall do most effectually, by cultivating and cherishing a strong and vigorous belief of the great doctrines of religion ; for “ this is the victory that overcometh the “ world, even our faith².”

One of the most powerful means of acquiring and increasing the love of God, is the contemplation of his excellency and goodness. Evil and corrupted as our nature is, yet still distinguished and exalted goodness is sure to meet not only with approbation, but with admiration and love ; and this, even in cases where we derive from it no advantage to ourselves. When we read or hear of the virtues of men who lived perhaps many centuries ago, or in far distant countries, or who

¹ 1 John ii. 15.² 1 John v. 4.

never existed at all but in the imagination of the writer, we feel for them a kind of esteem and affection. And, certainly, we ought to feel the same affection of soul, when we contemplate that Being, in whom goodness and every kind of moral excellence are found in the highest degree possible. Certainly we ought to *honour*, to *admire*, and to *love* him. When we reflect upon his goodness as displayed in the works of nature and providence, the language of our hearts ought certainly to be, *Thou art good, and doest good; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord; his mercies are over all his works. "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!"*

The love and admiration, however, which we feel for goodness in general, becomes naturally more strong, when from that goodness we ourselves derive some personal benefit. And so, when from considering the goodness of God to his creatures in general, we come to reflect upon his kindness to ourselves in particular, our admiration and love acquire warmth and strength from *gratitude*. Surely we must, and ought to love *him*, in whom we live and move and have our being; to whom we are indebted for food and raiment, for the kindness of friends, for the comforts of soci-

ety, for health of body, and tranquillity of mind. How many blessings do we daily and hourly receive ! Every comfortable night's rest, every sufficient meal, furnishes an argument for thankfulness. Especially how often have we been delivered from danger, how repeatedly might we have perished and been cut off in our sins, if God's protecting hand had not been stretched out to save us !! We have all abundant reason to say, " I will love " the Lord my strength," for thou art my deliverer and defence.—We have all cause to exclaim, " Praise the Lord, O my soul, and " forget not all his benefits²."

But when from this consideration of the goodness of God, both to men in general, and to ourselves, in the works of nature and providence, we go on to contemplate it as manifested in the work of redemption, our love and thankfulness ought to rise to the highest pitch. " God so loved the world, that he " gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever " believeth in him should not perish, but " have everlasting life." And does not this wonderful instance of the love and mercy of God richly deserve the warmest return of gratitude from us ? " Herein is love, not " that we loved God, but that he loved us, " and sent his Son to be the propitiation for " our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us³," we

¹ Paley.² Ps. ciii. 2. .³ 1 John iv. 10.

ought certainly to love him in return, as much as we possibly can, “with all our heart, “with all our soul, with all our mind, and “with all our strength,” and to love one another for his sake.

The principal means, however, of obtaining the love of God is *prayer*. The carnal mind, we are told, is enmity against God. The sinfulness and corruption of the nature of man indisposes him, and incapacitates him for this divine principle. That natural incapacity can only be removed by the Holy Spirit, of whose distinguishing fruits *love* is the *first*¹; and whose gracious office it is to “shed” the love of God “abroad in our hearts².” His aid for this purpose is to be obtained by earnest prayer; and certainly we *shall* pray for it, pray for it most earnestly, if we reflect, that without it we shall be guilty of disobedience to “the first and great commandment.”

No additional arguments can be requisite for quickening our endeavours and giving earnestness to our prayers, for obtaining this divine principle. Still it may not be unprofitable, in the last place, to add a few words on the advantages which accompany the love of God. It is rewarded with his favour and protection. “The Lord preserveth all them that love him.” He will watch over them

¹ Gal. vi. 22.

² Rom. vii. 5.

with fatherly care, and pour down his blessings upon them in an abundant measure. And when they are visited by outward calamity and affliction, when poverty, or pain, or sorrow, becomes their portion, yet even these seeming evils will be rendered beneficial to them, for “all things work together “for good to them that love God¹,” and “to “the godly there ariseth up light in the darkness,” the light of comfort, and hope, and spiritual joy, in the darkness of distress and grief. But it is in *the world to come* that the love of God will be most plenteously rewarded. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither “have entered into the heart of man, the “things which God hath prepared for them “that love him².” There, those who have loved him while on earth, will be admitted through Christ into his presence; and will to all eternity be made happy with that fulness of joy, which results from communication with the great object of their reverential affections, with those unspeakable pleasures which are at God’s right hand for evermore.

Let then the attainment of the love of God, the effectual keeping of *this first and great commandment*, be the object of our persevering endeavours, and of our most earnest prayers: And may that gracious Being, who hath prepared for them that love him such

¹ 1 Rom. viii. 28.

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² 1 Cor. ii. 9.

good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards Him, that we, loving Him above all things, may obtain his promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen ¹.

¹ Collect for the sixth Sunday after Trinity.

SERMON XIV.

WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS.

MATT. vi. 24.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”

Few things are more opposite to the love of God, and more tend to check the progress of religion in the soul, than the *love of the world*. Against the love of the world, accordingly, we are anxiously and repeatedly cautioned both by our Lord himself, and by the first teachers of his religion, the holy apostles. “Love not the world,” says St. John, “neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him¹.” From what follows in the following verse, “for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,”—it

¹ 1 John ii. 15.

seems that the apostle had in view those sins which are occasioned by the love of sensual pleasure, the love of show and ostentation, and the love of money. Our Saviour, when he warns us against worldly-mindedness, in the Sermon on the Mount, and in the striking parable of the wedding supper, appears to have had particularly in his contemplation, not so much acknowledged sins, as an excessive attachment to objects in themselves lawful,—such an attention to the business and cares of this life, as prevents us from paying due attention to the cares of the soul, and to the interests of the life to come. After cautioning his disciples against “laying up for themselves treasures upon earth,” and exhorting them rather “to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven,” and assigning the strongest reason for this advice, he goes on to say, in the words of the text, “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon.”

No man can serve two masters. To the truth of this maxim, when properly understood, you must without difficulty assent. To serve a master, is to obey the commands, to do the will, to perform the work of that master: and in this sense no one can serve two different masters at the same time. While

indeed their wills are exactly the same, and they command precisely the same things, it is true, that in doing the will of one, he does the will of the other also; but even in this case, one master must in his affections and mind have the superiority over the other. And when once their commands are different from, or contrary to, each other; when one master orders him to do one thing, and the other something else; when one master would send him one way, and the other in the opposite direction; he then cannot possibly obey both, but must show which is *really* his master, which it is whose authority he really acknowledges; he will then be forced "to hold to the one, and despise the other;" to act as if he loved one and hated the other.

Having laid down the general rule, or maxim, that no man can serve two masters, our Saviour goes on to apply it to a particular instance; "ye cannot serve God and Mammon." *Mammon* is a word of the Syriac language—the language of the country bordering on Judea—it properly signifies *riches*, and also the idol, whom the heathens of that country worshipped as the god of riches. In the passage before us, however, it means not simply *riches*, but every thing *worldly*, even what are considered (and in a certain sense *justly* considered) as the necessities of life. This appears from what follows in the very next verse, and again

towards the conclusion of the chapter. In the latter place our Lord says, "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all) these things do the Gentiles seek.) But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." *Mat. vi. 25-33.*

The truth, then, which our Saviour asserts in these words, the maxim which he lays down is, that we cannot be the servants of God and of the world at the same time; we cannot acknowledge and obey the authority of both at once. In many instances, indeed, the service of both may be apparently consistent. We may serve God faithfully, and attend, notwithstanding, in proper degree, to the business and cares of this life. And so, on the other hand, a man, who is devoted to the world, may, notwithstanding, in many instances attend to the outward service of God. But cases and occasions will arise, in which their service will interfere and clash; in which God commands one thing, and the world requires another; in which, if one is obeyed, the other must be disobeyed. Now it appears which is *really* master, whose servant a man really is, for "his servants ye are," says the apostle, "to whom ye obey." *2d. My friends, I wish we could all be brought* *in triumph as si* "I am to one which" *most* *Mat. vi. 33, 32, 33* *but not Rom. vi. 16*

seriously to reflect on this text, and honestly to ask our own consciences, whether we sincerely own the authority of the Lord Almighty, or that of the world; whether we serve God or Mammon? Let us examine the general turn of our thoughts, and the general conduct of our lives, and consider how we act, when the service of the world and the service of God interfere with each other; and we shall, through the divine assistance, be able to form a judgment in this matter. The inquiry is of the very last importance. We all pretend to be the servants of God; we all acknowledge that it is our duty to *serve him truly all the days of our life*, and we perhaps flatter ourselves that we do so. But let us not deceive ourselves. When the service of God requires one thing, and the service of the world another, which of the two do we attend to? which of the two is it that is obliged to give way?

My meaning may perhaps be made clear, by mentioning some particular instances.

Few things have tended more to preserve a sense of religion among men, than the institution of the Sabbath. The appointment of one day in seven, in which their minds are called away from their usual occupations, and the cares of this life, and invited seriously to fix themselves on those "unseen things" which are eternal, is an appointment in which the wisdom and goodness of him from

whom it proceeds are both manifested. It is notorious, that this sacred day is in many places sadly profaned; and it is equally plain, that much of this profanation proceeds from a disposition to serve and obey the world, rather than the God of heaven. One instance of the profanation of the Lord's day arising from such disposition, is, the custom which some persons fall into, of purchasing on the Sunday morning, whatever necessities may be required for the consumption of the week. This practice is not only a profanation of the Lord's day,—that day which both the laws of God and the laws of the land command us to keep *holy*,—but too often has a tendency to prevent both the buyer and the seller from joining in public worship. And why do they thus fly in the face of the laws both of God and man? simply because Mammon is their master; because they think that their worldly interest in some way requires it. The buyer will not spare for this purpose a quarter of an hour on any one of the “six days on which men ought to work;” and the seller fears, that if he refuses to sell on the Lord's day he shall offend a customer. His profits, he thinks, will be a trifle less; and that, in his eyes, is of more consequence than the service of his Maker. Now can such a person for a moment flatter himself, that he is the servant of God? He cannot help confessing, that *Mammon*, that the world, is his real master.

He cannot help acknowledging, that he habitually sacrifices the welfare of his soul, to the subsistence of the body.

When the practice just mentioned is occasioned by the payment of weekly wages on the Sunday morning, he by whom they are thus unduly paid clearly partakes in the guilt. Nearly the same may be said of those tradesmen, who prevent themselves from attending to the public service of God, by carrying out goods,—articles of clothing, for instance,—on the Sunday morning.

It is too from this undue attention to the service of the world, that very many habitually absent themselves from the Lord's supper. They know, and acknowledge, that all Christians of mature years ought to partake of this sacred ordinance ; but they know also, that they ought not to partake of it, without some preparation ; and for such preparation, the world, whose servants they are, will never allow them time. As the men in the parable of the wedding supper excused themselves from coming, on account of their worldly business, and went " one to his farm, another " to his merchandize ¹," so do too many still neglect every branch of the service, and of the worship of God, for the sake of some worldly occupation ; for the sake, perhaps, of

¹ Matt. xxii. 5. Luke xiv. 16.

obtaining some trifling gain, of advancing some paltry interest.

Do not misunderstand me, my friends. I am by no means exhorting you to neglect your worldly business. I am not encouraging you to be *idle*. I well know, that it is your duty to be diligent and industrious in that state of life, in which the providence of God has placed you. I well know, that it is the direction of the apostles, "that with quietness" men should "work, and eat their own bread,"—their *own bread*,—bread procured by their own exertions, by the toil and labour of their own hands. Neither am I exhorting you to neglect the care of your families. The word of God requires you to take care of them to the utmost of your power; and tells you, that "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house", *his own family*, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." What I wish to impress upon you is, that you *must* seek, "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" in the first place¹; that you must not so labour for the "meat that perisheth," as to neglect "the meat which endureth unto life everlasting," that you must not be so careful about

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 1.

² Matt. vii. 33.

³ 1 Tim. v. 8.

⁴ John vi. 27.

worldly things, as to neglect the one thing needful¹.

You must, I am sure, be sensible, that all who suffer the business, or the amusements, or the mistaken courtesies of the world to interfere with the duty which they owe to their Maker; still more those who make use of any unfair means of increasing their wealth, who are guilty of any kind of fraud and dishonesty, are all chargeable with the sin and folly of obeying the authority of Mammon, rather than the authority of the living God.

And now, my friends, to which class do we really belong? Which of the two shall we choose for our Master—God?—or the world?—Our Saviour tells you, that you must choose between them; that you cannot serve them both.

When a man is about to engage in a service, one of the principal things that are apt to occupy his thoughts, is the *wages* which he is likely to receive. From the world you know what treatment you have met with hitherto; and the wages, which you will receive from it when your time of service is expired, is *destruction*. The “world,” in the scriptural sense of the word, “lieth in wickedness²,” and they who have lived and died

¹ Luke x. 42.

² John v. 19.

its servants, will at the last day be “condemned with the world¹.”

On the other hand, God invites you to his service, and proffers the noblest rewards, wages of inestimable value. Indeed, on the plea of *gratitude*, you ought to devote yourselves entirely to him. It is from him that you received your being; it is he that preserves the life that he gave you; it is he that supplieth you with food and raiment, and giveth you richly all things to enjoy. From the work of his own hands, from the creature of his providential care, he surely has a right to expect unwearied and zealous obedience. Still more, however, than that; when we were exposed to eternal death, he rescued us from the ruin which awaited us, by giving his only Son to die for our sakes. Being thus bought with a price, no less a price than the blood of the eternal Son of God, we clearly are not our own², are not at liberty to give our service to what we please,—to the flesh, or to the world,—but by every tie of common justice and common gratitude, are bound to devote it to him, who has so dearly purchased it. We are bound to do this also by the motives of common prudence, by regard for our own interest; for the *wages* which God holds forth to his faith-

¹ 1 Cor. xi, 32.

² 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20.

ful and true servants, are great and valuable beyond description. They consist of happiness eternal and unchangeable in heaven,—of “an exceeding weight of glory, that fadeth not away.”

“Choose you,” then, my friends, “this day, “whom ye will serve¹,” whether God or Mammon. I must again remind you, that our Lord assures you, that you cannot be the servants of them both at the same time;—you cannot acknowledge the *authority* of both;—one must have superiority over the other in your hearts. You must not “halt “between two opinions²” and at one time consider God as your Lord, and at another take the world as your master;—but must resolve to give yourselves up either to one or to the other. Let us pray fervently for the aid of God’s good Spirit, that we may be directed and enabled to make the only wise choice. You must all, I trust, be ready to exclaim, “The Lord he is the God, the Lord “he is the God³!”—or, like the Jews in the book of Joshua, “The Lord our God will we “serve, and his voice will we obey⁴.”

If we make this choice in truth and good earnest, and sincerely endeavour by God’s grace to adhere to it; we may at length, through the merits of the Redeemer, hope

¹ Joshua xxiv. 15.

² 1 Kings xviii. 21.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 39.

⁴ Joshua xxiv. 24.

“to hear the encouraging voice, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord¹;”—to receive the gracious invitation, “~~Come~~ ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world².”

THE PRAYER.

Gracious Lord, mercifully grant us grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹ Matt. xxv. 21.

² Matt. xxv. 34.

SERMON XV.

CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

ROM. xiii. 2.

“ Be not conformed to this world.”

IN the journey, which we all profess to be travelling, towards the heavenly Jerusalem, we are on every side surrounded by temptations. Of these temptations, one of the most powerful, and most dangerous, is that which arises from our proneness to fall in with the customs and maxims of this *world*, of those whom we see around us, and with many of whom we are connected by the ties of social intercourse. In proportion to the prevalence of this temptation is the earnestness of Scripture in warning us against it. Both the old and the New Testament abound in passages bidding us beware of the dangers which await us from this quarter; and the first teachers of Christianity in particular repeatedly admonish us, *not to be conformed to this world*. To this subject, therefore, I now

wish to draw your attention ; and in doing this shall, First, make some remarks on the nature of the danger to which I allude : I shall, Secondly, point out some of the evil consequences of giving way to this temptation ; and shall conclude with an exhortation to a vigorous resistance to it.

In our earliest years we necessarily acquire the habit of imitating what we see done by others ; and this habit gains strength as we advance in age, until it becomes almost a second nature.

We willingly think, that what is generally practised, what is usual with all around us, what is done by *the world*, must be right, or at least not greatly wrong ; and easily allow ourselves to fall in with the stream. To set up our opinions and practice against theirs, we choose to consider as a degree of presumption, and cannot bear the imputation of being singular, and unlike the rest of mankind. Those, among whom we live, of course wish to strengthen and encourage these impressions. They wish to have all others like themselves, to increase the numbers of their party ; and regard any one who does not conform to their maxims and habits of life, as throwing a sort of blame upon them. “ Thus doing,” say they, “ thou reproachest “ us.” Consequently, they habitually endeavour to keep all they can in their ranks ; and if they see any one professing principles, or

adopting a line of conduct, superior to those of the times, they assail him with ridicule or with censure, and upbraid him for being singular. These temptations to *conformity with the world* are strengthened by the support which they derive from the insinuations of the great enemy of our souls, and by that which they find in our own native corruptions. The power of these temptations, shows itself in the conduct and language which are commonly maintained. A large proportion of the sins both of omission and commission, both of leaving undone what we ought to do, and doing what we ought not to do, are occasioned by conformity to the world. The practice of the generality furnishes, at once, a great part both of the temptation and of the excuse. Multitudes, both old and young, if asked why they persist in some bad practice, or the neglect of some known duty, notwithstanding the injunctions of the divine law, will answer, that they merely *do as others do*. Why, for instance, are so many guilty of the foolish but dreadful vice of cursing and swearing—a vice which they know exposes them to God's wrath, and at the same time is unattended with either pleasure or advantage? They have no reason to give but *custom*. Why do men, who have really no taste themselves for the shameful sin of drunkenness, often suffer themselves to be guilty of it? from con-

formity to the world; from compliance, *weak* compliance, with the wishes and example of their company? Why do so many pursue a thoughtless careless life, with no appearance of that fear of God, that religious watchfulness, which they ought habitually to maintain? Because this is the mode of living adopted by the generality of those around them. Why do so many—of the young especially—live in the wilful neglect of the Lord's supper? from falling in with the practice of the majority. Young persons, who have been confirmed, acknowledge their obligation to comply with the precepts of Scripture; they know that the Lord's supper is *generally necessary to salvation*; they know that Jesus Christ *hath commanded* them to receive it, and that he gave the command in the same night in which he was betrayed, when he was just going to die for their sakes. They know all this, and yet act contrary to it all. And why? they have no reason to give for their neglect, except, that most young persons neglect it as they do. Conformity to the example of numbers weighs more with them than the laws of God.

In short, in all ranks and stations in life, conformity to the world, or *fashion* as it is called, furnishes the most usual rule and guide of conduct.

Powerful, however, as are the temptations to such compliance with the maxims and

customs of those around us, it greatly behoves us to resist them. "Be not conformed to this world," says the apostle in the text. However much by habit and inclination, and by the love of ease, you may be disposed to fall in with the general practice and prevailing opinions of the world, yet be careful that you do not comply with them, except so far as you are warranted in doing so by the revealed will of God.

The danger of such conformity or compliance may be inferred, from the description of the world given in the Scriptures, and from our own observation and experience. The representation given in the oracles of truth of the general state of the world is most unfavourable. In the beginning of things, it is true, every creature of God was good, and man was made innocent and upright. Very soon, however, we find, that "through envy
"of the devil"¹ sin entered into the world, and in a short time increased and spread so rapidly, that we read that "God saw that the
"wickedness of man was great in the earth,
"and that every imagination of the thoughts
"of his heart was only evil continually."² In the time of Noah, we find that the world was so generally corrupt, that God was induced to destroy it by the waters of the flood. In that state, St. Peter emphatically calls it the

¹ Wisdom ii. 24.

² Gen. [vi.] 5.

“world of the ungodly¹.” Again, from the records of inspiration, we find how soon after the flood, notwithstanding that awful visitation, the world was again overspread with ignorance of God, idolatry, and wickedness, which seem to have generally prevailed at the time of the calling of Abraham. When God separated to himself a peculiar people, and made them the depositary of his law and his worship, it would have seemed probable that they at least would have kept themselves pure, and separate from sinners. Their history, however, is little else than a history of their repeated rebellions and defections to idolatry, and of the punishments which, in consequence, were inflicted on them. There was but too much cause for the pathetic lamentations of the Divine Psalmist; “Help me, “Lord,” says he, “for there is not one godly “man left: for the faithful are minished from “among the children of men².” And again, “God looked down from heaven upon the “children of men: to see if there were any “that would understand and seek after God.” And what is the result of this examination or scrutiny? “They are all gone out of the “way, they are altogether become abominable: there is also none that doeth good, “no not one³.”

In this depraved state did the world con-

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 5.

² Psalm xii. 1.

³ Ps. liii. 3, 4.

tinue until the coming of our blessed Lord. But you will ask, did the pure precepts which he gave, and the holy example which he set—did the teaching and the exemplary lives of his apostles produce no alteration, no change for the better? We acknowledge, and acknowledge with heartfelt gratitude, that they did. In proportion as the religion of Christ, as the Gospel of peace, extended itself, the wickedness of mankind was diminished, and righteousness and holiness increased.

Isaiah had foretold, that the blessed effects of the coming of Christ would be, that “the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together¹”; that is, that the angry and violent passions of men should be subdued into gentleness and meekness. And in very many instances these effects have been produced. Peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, have more and more flourished, and the general tone of morals and sentiment have been raised and improved, even among many who have not embraced the faith of Christ.

All this we thankfully acknowledge; but when from this brighter side of the picture we turn to that which is less favourable, we still find much to deplore; we still find that iniquity abounds, that corruption too gene-

¹ Isaiah xi.^o 6.

rally prevails. The chronicles of the times, both in this and other countries, are filled with records of the crimes and the follies of men. And if we look around us as far as our own observation will extend, how much do we see of what is wrong, and how little comparatively of what is right! It is, no doubt, unpleasant to think ill of any, and a readiness to find fault is justly regarded as unamiable; but, after making all possible allowance, and taking every thing in the most favourable point of view, we cannot help perceiving, that the *world*, the generality of mankind, is still not effectually influenced by religious principles. For how many of those around us appear to be utterly regardless of religion and its sanctions! how many are addicted to swearing, or drunkenness, or dishonesty! how many are the backbiters, and the railers, and the spiteful! how many live in the neglect of God's public worship, and how many of those who outwardly are present, appear to be uninfluenced by any feelings of devotion! We still, I fear, must confess, that the world, in the scriptural sense of the word, lieth in wickedness; that the way trod by the many is the broad and easy way that leadeth to destruction; that they who live as the world lives, will perish with the world. Therefore it is that the apostle says, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing;"

and again, in the language of the text, “ Be
“ not conformed to the world.”

Let me, therefore, exhort and entreat you, my friends, to beware of shaping your opinions and practice by the opinions and practice of the world, and taking them as your only, or your chief rule of conduct. Do not flatter yourselves and stifle your convictions by saying, that you *do but as others do ; that you are not worse than your neighbours ; that you live as the rest of the world lives.* If there is any truth in the text which I have last referred to, that very circumstance ought to alarm you. If you live as the world lives, you are in danger of perishing with the world ; if you walk in the same path with the many, you have reason to fear that you are travelling in the road that leadeth to destruction. Remember, that you are cautioned not to follow a multitude to do evil. Be assured that numbers will not screen you from the penalty of your disobedience ; be assured that “ though hand join in hand, the wicked
“ shall not be unpunished.” Instead of forming your conduct by the maxims and customs of the world, you must form them by the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures. “ To
“ the law and to the testimony” you must have recourse for your direction. You should adopt the avowal and the resolution of the Psalmist, “ Thy word is a lantern unto my
“ feet, and a light unto my paths ; I have

“sworn, and am stedfastly purposed to keep “thy righteous judgments¹.” We engaged as much when at the baptismal font we engaged to keep God’s holy will and commandments; let us be stedfastly purposed to adhere to that engagement, and pray for Divine grace and strength to enable us to adhere to it. When our duty is clearly pointed out to us in God’s word, we must resolve to keep to it, although every one else should act differently; and must never be so weak as to suffer the example of numbers, or what is called *fashion*, to lead us astray. When the customs of the world are lawful and innocent, we not only may, but *ought* to comply with them; I am far from recommending, I would rather caution you against, an unnecessary and affected singularity. St. Paul, in things indifferent, became all things to all men; and in similar cases we should do the same. In things *indifferent*, compliance with other men is praise-worthy. But we must take heed that compliance with others do not lead us one step farther than is warranted by the word of God. In all matters of *duty*, we must, if so required, dare to be *singular*, to whatever blame or whatever ridicule our singularity may expose us. We seldom, blessed be God, shall be left really alone in our resolute opposition to sin; we seldom shall be

¹ Ps. cix. 105, 106 .

left without the countenance and support of men equally prepared to adhere to their duty; and we trust that the numbers of such are still increasing. But if it were otherwise, still we must not be frightened from what we know to be right. Noah stood *alone* when he was a doer and preacher of righteousness in the world of the ungodly: the holy prophets of God had the *generality* against them, so that Elijah exclaimed, though erroneously, “I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away¹,” the Lord Jesus was left *alone* amidst his enemies; and his holy apostles were engaged in a continual warfare against the *generality* of the world. We must expect that the men of the world will wish to make us resemble themselves, and that they will dislike us if we refuse. Thus, in the Book of Wisdom, the sinners are represented as saying of the righteous, “He is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and objecteth to our infamy the transgressings of our education².” And again, “He was made to reprove our thoughts; he is grievous to us even to behold, for his life is not like other men’s; his ways are of another fashion³.” The designing and the unthinking will unite, in endeavouring to

¹ 1 Kings xix. 10. ² Wisdom ii. 12. ³ Wisdom ii. 14, 15.

deter us from our religious singularity, both by expressions of blame, and by laughter and contempt. But we must not be so weak and so *cowardly* as to be influenced by either. "Fear ye not the reproach of men," says the prophet, "neither be ye afraid of their revilings¹." The solemn warning too of our Divine Master should never be forgotten by us. "Whosoever shall confess me before men;" whoever, from a sense of duty and obedience to Christ, exposes himself to persecution, or contempt, or ridicule; "him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven²." And, on the other hand, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels³." Let us, my friends, never be guilty of such weak and unmanly cowardice. The approbation of our own conscience is of far more consequence to us than the opinion of the world; and the approbation of the Lord Almighty is of infinitely more value than any thing else. Our connexion with this world can last but a very little while, and it is not, it cannot be, very material whether, during that connexion, it gives us its smiles or its frowns. "This I

¹ Isaiah li. 7.² Matt. x. 32.³ Mark viii. 38.

“ say,” brethren, “ the time is short—for the “ fashion of this world passeth away¹.” Or, as it is said by St. John, “ The world passeth “ away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth “ the will of God abideth for ever².” Let it be our care, my friends, thus to do the will of God, regardless alike of the world’s frowns, and of the world’s applause. And let us pray fervently to God, that he would so strengthen us with might by his Spirit in the inner man³; that he would so “ stablish, strengthen, settle “ us⁴ ;” that we may never follow a multitude to do evil; that we may never be so conformed to this world, as to partake of its vices, and share in its condemnation.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

³ Eph. iii. 16.

² 1 John ii. 17.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 10.

SERMON XVI.

RESIGNATION.

1 SAM. iii. 18.

“ It is the Lord : let him do what seemeth him good.”

WHEN any one holds a high place in our esteem and affection, we are naturally disposed to comply with all his wishes, even when such compliance would otherwise be irksome to us; and thus one of the happy effects of the prevalence of the love of God in the heart, will be a cheerful submission to his will.

We are taught to regard this life as a state of trial; a state of moral discipline, designed to prepare us for another world; a state in which God often sees fit to humble us and to prove us, to show what is in our heart, whether we would keep his commandments or no¹.

It seems essential to a state of trial, that it

¹ Deut. viii. 2.

should be exposed to difficulties and distresses. Accordingly, from the cradle to the grave, the life of man is liable to a variety of sufferings. We often have to encounter pains of body, and grief of mind : pains of body arising from sickness and hurts, from cold and hunger ; and grief and vexation of mind proceeding from ten thousand causes, from failure in our undertakings, from losses of property, from injuries to our good name, from the perverseness of those under our care, from the unkindness of pretended friends, from the malice of enemies, and the removal by death of those who are dear to us as our own soul. All these, and the many like afflictions, not only occasion pain when they actually come upon us, but the dread and apprehension of them when at a distance, when, indeed, they may never happen *at all*—often serves to fill the soul with anxiety, and to embitter all its enjoyments. So many, indeed, are the sources of uneasiness, that it was not without cause that the friend of Job asserts, “ Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly “ upward¹.”

And in what manner are these varied evils to be endured ? The disposition of man, when uninfluenced by religion, is, to be fretful and impatient under them, to murmur and repine, to complain of fortune or of fate,

¹ Job v, 7.

or by whatever name he may designate the author of his sufferings. But is it so with the Christian? *He* is accustomed, in all circumstances, to look up to an over-ruling Providence. *He* is accustomed to think, that “affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground¹ ;” that it is not the result of blind chance or fortune, but that it happens with the knowledge and by the permission of a gracious Governor of the world. Our blessed Lord, when exhorting his followers to place their trust in God for protection, and for the supply of their wants, assures them, that a sparrow doth not fall on the ground without our Father; that even the hairs of our head are all numbered². This belief in a controlling Providence, the persuasion that all things happen according to the will of an all-powerful, all-wise, and good Being, will naturally produce a habit of patient submission under all circumstances, however calamitous. If God is *all-powerful*, his will must inevitably be accomplished, notwithstanding any opposition that may be made, or any rebellious murmuring. Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that doeth he in heaven and in earth³: and “who hath resisted,”—who *can* resist “his will⁴?” A *sullen* submission, however, because we cannot

¹ Job v. 6.² Matt. x. 29, 30.³ Ps. cxxxv. 6.⁴ Rom. ix. 19.

do otherwise, because we cannot help it, is not the submission of a Christian. The common sense of a heathen, or even of one who believes in no Supreme Being at all, will tell him, that evils which cannot be either avoided or removed, *must* be borne; and that the more patiently they are endured, the less painful will they be found. The Christian, however, believes and is persuaded, not only that God is all-powerful, but that he is also all-wise, and all-good; that if he is “mighty in strength,” he is mighty also in “wisdom¹,” and that not only he doeth whatever pleaseth him, but that whatever he pleaseth to do is *fittest* and *best* to be done: not only hath the Lord created all things in wisdom, but with infinite wisdom does he direct and govern them. The reasons of his dispensations we cannot always understand: but if we submit to them with humble resignation, and “through faith and patience inherit the promises²,” we shall in a better state perceive the reasonableness and the wisdom of them. “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter³.” Though we cannot at all times understand them, yet we may be assured that they are regulated not only by wisdom, but by goodness; that God wills the happiness of his creatures; that he is good “unto every man, and his mercy is over all

¹ Job xxxvi. 5.² Heb. vi. 12.³ John xiii. 7.

“his works¹.” Though now “clouds and “darkness are round about him,” though the reasons of what he does are wrapped in obscurity, yet we may be sure that they are guided by justice, “that righteousness and “judgment are the habitation of his seat².” Many tokens and instances of *goodness* have been conferred upon us by God; and “shall “we receive good at the hand of God, and “shall we not receive evil³?” If we are now deprived of any blessing by him, by whom that blessing was bestowed, the language of our hearts should be, “The Lord gave, and “the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the “name of the Lord.” We cannot suppose that a merciful and gracious Being can take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The Lord “doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve “the children of men⁴” for his own pleasure; but “chastens us for our profit,” for our advantage.

Reflection on the nature of this benefit, on the moral uses of affliction, will furnish a strong additional argument for quiet and cheerful resignation. One of the uses of affliction is, the tendency which it has to wean our affections from the things of this world. Too great attachment to earthly objects, is the cause of much of the wickedness

¹ Ps. cxlv. 9.² Ps. xcvii. 2.³ Job ii. 10.⁴ Job i. 12.⁵ Lam. iii. 33.

and of much of the misery, which prevails among men. Most kinds of affliction tend powerfully to lessen their influence, and to make us thoroughly and deeply sensible of their uncertain and unsatisfying nature. This, to a greater or less degree, is the effect of bodily pain and disease, of loss of property, of loss of reputation, and, above all, of separation by death from those we love.

Another great moral use of affliction is, its efficacy, in bringing us to *repentance*, and to serious reflection upon our spiritual condition. When the world smiles upon us, and all things go on well and prosperously, we are too apt to grow careless and remiss in our Christian warfare, in our contest against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are too apt to fall, in some measure, into the sin of the Israelites, who, when in prosperous circumstances, “forgot God their Saviour, who “had done so great things¹” for them. But affliction leads us to reflect seriously upon ourselves and on our past conduct; and to consider what there is in it that is displeasing to the Almighty, and requires correction. It inclines each of us humbly to say, “Shew me “wherefore thou contendest with me²,” to “search and try our ways, and turn again to “the Lord³.” When brought to a sense of our sinfulness, instead of complaining of what

¹ Ps. cvi. 21.² Job x. 2.³ Lam. iii. 40.

we suffer, we shall feel thankful that our sufferings are not still more severe. We shall be disposed to say, "Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins¹?" Reformation and amendment of life was the effect which affliction produced upon the Psalmist. "Before I was troubled I went wrong; but *now* have I kept thy word:" and again, "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes²." When suffering produces these salutary consequences, when it is the means of bringing us to genuine repentance and amendment of life, it is to be looked upon as a real blessing. If we are chastened and corrected, "that we should not be given over unto death; that we should not be condemned with the world³;" it is certainly a strong instance of the love and goodness of God, and consequently a strong argument, not for sullen acquiescence, but for cheerful and thankful *resignation*. It is, in a religious point of view, alarming to be "without chastisement, whereof all are partakers;" it is dangerous to have our portion in this life. If, on the other hand, we "endure chastening, God dealeth with us as with sons." We have then cause to say, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth⁴." "Blessed is the

¹ Lam. iii. 39.² Ps. cxix. 67. 71.³ 1 Cor. xi. 32.⁴ Job v. 17.

“ man whom thou chasteneth, O Lord ¹, and “ teachest him in thy law ;” who by chastening is brought to the knowledge and practice of religion.

Instances of humble and pious submission to the divine will abound in many parts of the sacred Scriptures. Job, when his calamities first came upon him, was a noble example of resignation ; and is held forth to us as such in the New Testament ; “ ye have “ heard of the patience of Job².” When messenger after messenger arrived with disastrous tidings, first, of the total loss of all his large property, and then of the destruction of all his children at one blow ; yet still the violence of his grief did not induce him to utter any murmurings against Providence ; “ in all “ this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly³.” The language of his heart and of his lips was, “ The Lord gave, and the Lord “ hath taken away ; blessed be the name of “ the Lord ⁴.” When at last, through the extremity of bodily pain, in addition to his other heavy sufferings, he gave way to some expressions of impatience, he was soon restored to his former pious frame of mind ; and, in the genuine feeling of penitence and piety, exclaimed, “ Behold I am vile ; what shall I “ answer thee ? I will lay mine hand upon

¹ Ps. xciv. 12.

³ Job i. 22.

² Jam. v. 11.

Job i. 21.

“my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer; yea, twice; but I will proceed no further¹.” The aged Eli is another instructive and interesting instance of humble submission to the Divine will. When warned of the fatal consequences which his mistaken fondness for his sons would bring upon his family, his only answer was, “It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.” And when the awful prediction was accomplished in the death of both his sons in one day, the grief, which appears to have struck him down as a thunderbolt, was not that which was occasioned by his own dreadful domestic losses, but by his concern for the honour of God, and for the interest of the religion of which he was the most distinguished minister². The Psalms of David are full of expressions, as of all other instances of devout affections, so especially of humble resignation to the Divine will. He repeatedly expresses his conviction of the salutary effects of affliction, and of the gracious intentions of God in sending them. The knowledge that they proceeded from *him* suppressed all murmuring and impatience. “I became dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was thy doing.” When driven from his throne by the unnatural rebellion of his son, and the fickleness and ingratitude of his

¹ Job xl. 4, 5.² 1 Sam. iv. 18.

subjects, he showed the same humble resignation to the will of God; “Behold, here am I, “let him do to me as seemeth good unto him¹.” His enemies he regarded merely as instruments in the hand of Providence for his humiliation. “Let him alone,” said he of Shimei, “and “let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden “him².”

But the most noble instance of resignation was our divine Saviour. He left “us an “example that we should follow his steps,” especially in meek submission to the will of the Most High, in committing ourselves to him who judgeth righteously. Through life he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. He was exposed to poverty and hunger, to the malice and calumnies of enemies, to the unkindness and desertion of friends. And at his death he endured so much, as to have reason to say, in the words of the prophet, “Behold, and see if there be “any sorrow like unto my sorrow,—where— “with the Lord hath afflicted me in the day “of his fierce anger³.” And with what perfect resignation did he endure it all! When the knowledge of the extremity of anguish which awaited him led him to utter a wish that he might be spared it,—“If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;”—he immediately adds, “nevertheless, not as I will,

¹ 1 Sam. xv. 26.² 2 Sam. xvi. 11.³ Lam. i. 12.

“but as thou wilt—not my will, but thine be done.”

With whatever afflictions we may at any time be visited, we should reflect upon the example of our Lord, and learn from him the lesson of resignation. “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds¹.”

Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds;—this is a natural effect of affliction. “Heavenness in the heart of man maketh it stoop².” Affliction, where it does not find utterance in any rebellious murmurings, yet has a tendency to sink us into a general state of depression, perhaps despondency. It too often makes us forget the many blessings which still remain to us; it perhaps renders us indisposed for the performance of any active duties, and inclined to make our grief or pain an excuse to ourselves for neglecting them. We must guard against this too usual consequence of affliction. If we have lost some blessings, yet let us not be the less thankful for—let us

¹ Heb. xii. 1, 2, 3.

² Prov. xii. 25.

rather make the most of—those which still remain to us. If we endure some pain or suffering, yet let it not so conquer us as to render us unmindful of God's many and great mercies. Particularly we must guard against permitting affliction to prevent us from fulfilling those duties of life which are still in our power. We must not make *suffering* God's will, a pretext for not *doing* it. Indeed, one of the best remedies for affliction will be found in active employment in the way of duty. The wise man, when he says, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord;" adds, "neither be weary of his correction¹." We shall be, in great measure, prevented from being thus *weary*, from being thus weakly overcome, from thus permitting affliction to depress us into inactivity, by the religious considerations above suggested; and especially, by dwelling upon the example of resignation set us by our Redeemer.

Are we, for instance, afflicted with pain of body, occasioned either by sickness, or by any accidental hurt? Let us reflect on the anguish which our Saviour endured for our sakes, and endured with perfect and willing resignation to his Father's dispensations. Are we assailed by the malice of enemies, who, perhaps, endeavour to injure our reputations by laying to our charge things that

¹ Prov. iii. 11. and Heb. xii. 5.

we know not? Let us think on the opprobrious names that were heaped on the Lord of life; who was called a glutton and a drunkard, the friend of publicans and sinners; who was treated as a wretched outcast; and charged with working his miracles through the agency of the devil. Are we tried by poverty, and the want of the comforts, perhaps of the necessities, of life? Let us remember that Jesus Christ was often exposed to cold and hunger, and had not where to lay his head; that he has represented the state of poverty as a state attended by many spiritual advantages, and riches as accompanied by a variety of snares and temptations, which obstruct men in the way to salvation. Are our friends unkind and inconstant? Our Lord was deserted by his chosen followers in his time of need; denied by one of them, and rejected and given over to death by the people among whom he had done so many mighty works of mercy and benevolence, that very people who had welcomed him to Jerusalem with Hosannahs and songs of triumph.

One of the severest of earthly afflictions is that which we experience when dear friends and relations are removed from us by death. But this affliction, great as it is, we shall learn to bear with resignation, if we consider it as proceeding from a kind and merciful Father; here, especially, we must learn to say from our hearts, “the Lord gave, and the

“ Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the “ name of the Lord.” The Scriptures teach us, that if our friends have departed in the faith and fear of God, they have gone to a better place, where we may hope to rejoin them ; and that consequently we must not be sorry as men without hope for them that sleep in the Lord¹.

To conclude : This prospect of a future life of happiness ought to be a constant support under all afflictions, and a powerful motive for resignation under them. If we have a well-founded hope of being admitted through Christ to a state of happiness, which will never end, the afflictions which we endure *here* will seem of trifling importance. “ I reckon,” says St. Paul, “ that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to “ be compared with the glory which shall be “ revealed in us².” Any sufferings *here* are as nothing, when compared either with the pains of hell, from which we have been redeemed, or with the glory which is set before us. “ Our light affliction, which is but for a “ moment³,”—the whole life of man is but a moment when compared with eternity,—is as nothing, when set against “ that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” to which Christ has opened the way. If affliction is instrumental in bringing us to that

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 13.

² Rom. viii. 18.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

glory, it ought to be borne not only with submission, but with thankfulness. We acquiesce, without difficulty, in whatever is done by those whom we love and esteem highly. If we love God as we ought to do, we shall feel no disposition to murmur against him, or to rebel against his will. In our daily prayers we say to him, "thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Let us endeavour to acquire the habit of both *doing* and *suffering* his will with readiness and cheerfulness. Let us pray fervently for grace and strength to subdue and bend the stubbornness of our *own* wills, and to enable us, under whatever affliction, to say from the heart, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." "Lord, not my will, but thine be done."

THE PRAYER.

O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth, fix ever in our hearts a firm faith and confidence in thee, that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XVII.

HUMILITY.

1 PETER V. 5.

“Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

HUMILITY is one of the most important features in the Christian character. It is intimately connected with almost all the right affections of the soul, both towards God and man; and he who wishes to build up the fair edifice of Christian holiness, must begin by laying his foundation deep and low in genuine humility.

In discoursing on this subject, it is my wish,

First, to lay before you the reasons for humility, which are to be found in the nature and condition of man in general, and in our own characters in particular:

Secondly, to point out the close connexion of humility with other parts of the Christian character:

Thirdly, to direct your attention to some of the many passages of Scripture which recommend this virtue.

And to conclude, with such practical advice as shall appear to me most likely to be of use.

I. Humility consists in a low opinion of our own worth, talents, and acquirements; such an opinion as is agreeable to truth. It consists in complying with the exhortation of the Apostle, "I say to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think *soberly* ¹."

In order that we may not think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, it is necessary that we should acquire a thorough knowledge and feeling of our many wants and imperfections, our weaknesses and sins.

The condition of man in this world is well calculated to make him humble, and to keep him so. As he had his beginning out of nothing, so every moment of his existence he depends entirely upon that Being, in whom alone he lives and moves, and who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; when he hideth his face, his poor creatures are troubled; when he taketh away their breath they die, and are turned again to their dust ²

¹ Rom. xii. 3.

² Psalm civ. 29.

“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return¹,” was part of the sentence upon man when he sinned; and, accordingly, the father of the faithful acknowledges himself to be “but dust and ashes²”; and the son of Sirach asks, “why is earth and ashes proud³?” certainly, the feeling, not only that while here we are dependent upon another for life and health and all things, but also, that at any moment we may be called away into the forgetfulness of the grave, when we shall say “to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister⁴,” ought to produce in us a deep impression of humility. And if we consider ourselves, not only as dependant and mortal creatures, but as creatures polluted with sin, we must feel, most forcibly, that “pride was not made for man⁵.”

When from the condition of man in general, we turn our attention to our *own* infirmities and sins, we shall find still more abundant cause for the deepest humility and self-abasement. Let us reflect how many are our transgressions in thought, word, and deed; how little we do that is pleasing to God, and how even that little is tainted with vanity and worldly motives. Which of us could bear that all that passes in his bosom

¹ Gen. iii. 19.

² Gen. xviii. 27.

³ Eccus. x. 9.

⁴ Job xvii. 14.

⁵ Eccus. x. 18.

should be publicly known? that all the vain, all the impure, all the uncharitable thoughts and imaginations, which rise in his mind, should be seen by all the world? the very thought of such a disclosure must fill us with shame and confusion of face.

And while we have such great cause for humility, we have none whatever for pride. For what if we are possessed of any seeming advantages? what if you are more rich, or more beautiful, or more strong, or more learned than another? none of these advantages are really your own. They all are talents entrusted to your stewardship by God, and you must be asked the question, "Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it¹?" Therefore, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches²," "but he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord³."

II. Let us, in the next place, consider how closely humility is connected with other parts of the Christian character. It is, in fact, in some degree, the ground-work of almost all right affections, both towards God and man.

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 7. ² Jer. ix. 23. ³ 2 Cor. x. 17.

And first, humility leads us to maintain a right frame of heart towards God. Pride is the great source of neglect and contempt of religion. The proud man, as he will not acknowledge the want of any extrinsic support—any support not proceeding from himself,—so he cannot bear to submit his own will to the will of any other being, however great and excellent that being may be. Such men, consequently, are too prone to discard both the protecting power, and the authority, of God. “Therefore they say unto God, “Depart from us, for we desire not the “knowledge of thy ways. What is the Al-
“mighty, that we should serve him? and
“what profit should we have, if we pray unto
“him’?” The humble man, on the contrary, constantly feels his dependance upon God. He knows that it is from him that he receives “life and breath, and all things²,” and, consequently, looks up to the Giver of all good with humble thankfulness and love. And while he is thankful for mercies already received, knowing that he is indebted for them, not to his own merits, but to the goodness of God; so his sense of his dependent condition, and of his innumerable wants both of body and soul, leads him earnestly to pray to God for the continuance of his protection, support, and help. Thus humility will keep

¹ Job xxi. 14, 15.² Acts xvii. 25.

up a habit of piety, a devotional frame of mind.

And it will not only render him thankful to God, and frequent and earnest in his prayers ; it will also induce him to submit to the divine will in all things, both in doing and suffering it. He will be contented in that state of life in which the providence of God has placed him, and never give way to a dissatisfied repining temper. And when visited with any trials or afflictions, he will bear them with resignation and patience. His humility will induce him to feel, that whatever he endures is less than his iniquities deserve ; and will dispose him to say from the heart, “ Why should a living man complain ; a man for the punishment of his sins ? ” He will say with sincerity, “ It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good : Lord, not my will, but thine be done.”

And as humility disposes him in this manner to *suffer* God’s will ; so will it induce him to *do* God’s will without disputing it. “ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ? ” will be the genuine language of his soul : and when he knows the will of God, he will try to do it at *once*, without setting up his own will in opposition to it.

And, as humility leads to the formation of right feelings towards God, so does it bring man thankfully to receive the salvation of-

ferred him through Christ. The *proud* feel no want of a Saviour. They that think themselves in a state of perfect health, see no need of a physician. They that conceive themselves to be "rich and increased with goods, and" to "have need of nothing¹," are ready "to despise the riches of God's goodness," as shown in the redemption of mankind. The humble man, on the other hand, who is deeply penetrated with the sense of his own unworthiness and sin; who feels that in his natural state he is "wretched, "and miserable, and poor, and blind, and "naked," accepts thankfully the mercy proffered to him; he feels his need of pardon, and gladly embraces the pardon offered him through the blood of the cross. He suffers no proud reasonings, no disputings or wisdom of this world, to come in his way, but meekly and thankfully submits himself to the righteousness of God, and to the method of justification which the divine wisdom has devised.

Thus too, with respect to the aid of the Holy Spirit. While the proud man thinks that he stands in no need of assistance, but that of his own native strength alone he is able to do all that is right, that of *himself* he is thoroughly furnished unto all good works; the humble man, who is sensible of his own

¹ Rev. iii. 17.

weakness and spiritual wants, seeks earnestly for the help of the blessed Spirit, and rejoices in the conviction, that there is grace to help him in time of need.

And as humility thus disposes us to be rightly affected towards God, so does it most essentially tend to keep us in a right temper towards man. The foundation of all the duties between man and man is *love* or *charity*. What now is it that most usually occasions interruptions of this love and charity? What is it that most frequently is the cause of dissensions and quarrels, and consequently of the hatred and malice which grow out of them? I answer, *pride*—the evil pride of our fallen nature. When under the influence of that pride, men in every station of life,—the poor, perhaps, just as much as the rich,—are ready to take offence at every thing. At one time they are offended because they think they are treated with neglect or disrespect; at another, because some little interest of theirs,—which, *because it is theirs*, they look upon as great—appears to be invaded. Some thoughtless expression, some unguarded action, perhaps some look, they consider as an insult; their pride is directly up in arms, and they give vent to their feelings in angry language, if not in angry deeds. A really humble man will not quarrel with any one. He makes all possible allowances for the failings and tempers of other men, and

hardly ever takes offence. If they utter against him reproachful language, he feels that he deserves it, if not from them, yet from the hand of God. Perhaps he is not guilty of the faults which angry men lay to his charge, but he is conscious to himself of others, which deserve reproof and punishment. It was in this temper that David, justly penetrated with the sense of his own guiltiness, meekly bore the scornful reproaches and curses of Shimei. "Let him alone," said he, "and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him¹." And thus, when men speak reproachfully of us, and lay to our charge things that we know not, we should look upon them as instruments employed by God for our humiliation and correction. At the same time, humility will induce us to give up our own wills and wishes to other men; not to stand pertinaciously to our own opinions, not to insist loudly that we are in the right, and all who oppose us in the wrong. It will rather induce us to comply with the injunction of the apostle, "all of you be subject one to another²;" or, as it is in another place, to submit "yourselves one to another in the fear of God³." I am sure, my friends, that you must see how many quarrels and dissensions would be prevented by hu-

¹ 2 Sam. xvi. 11. ² 1 Pet. v. 5. ³ Eph. v. 21.

mility; and how true it is, that “only by “*pride* cometh contention¹.”

You must perceive, too, how greatly humbleness of mind contributes to a man's own peace and comfort. When our Saviour says, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:” he adds, “and ye shall find rest “unto your souls².” Nothing occasions so much disquiet and discomfort in a man's mind as *pride*. Pride makes him envious of one man, jealous of another, and angry with a third. He is always looking for, and finding, some fresh cause of uneasiness and mortification. He is at the mercy of the meanest individual, who, by some apparent neglect, or merely by withholding some customary tribute of respect, which he looks upon as due to him, fills his bosom with vexation. Such was the case with the proud Haman, when Mordecai refused to do him reverence. Though at the height of power, and wealth, and dignity, yet all these advantages were lost to him, because a single individual of a despised nation withheld from him the tokens of respect which were paid him by all others. “All this” honour and splendour, said he, “availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate³.” And thus it is with every proud man, with-

¹ Prov. xiii. 10.

² Matt. xi. 29.

³ Esther v. 13.

out exception. The *humble* man careth little for any of those things. The faults and failings, of which he is conscious, make him feel that he does not really deserve respect, and therefore he is little hurt if it is not paid him. Consequently, he “finds rest unto his “soul” from all the great and little vexations, to which the proud are exposed; he finds rest from—he is not discomposed and disturbed by—a foolish touchiness and readiness to take offence: still less by jealousy, or envy, or excessive anger.

III. The time would fail me, if I should endeavour to enumerate all the beneficial effects of humility. What has been said has been sufficient, I trust, to make you understand, with how much reason this virtue is so earnestly recommended and enforced in the Scriptures both of the Old and of the New Testament.

In the former we are told, that “to walk “humbly” with our God¹, is one of the chief things which he requires of us. We are told, that “though the Lord be high, yet hath he “respect unto the lowly; but the proud he “knoweth afar off².” “Surely he scorneth “the scorers; but he giveth grace unto the. “lowly³.” We are told, that “when pride “cometh, then cometh shame: but with the

¹ Micah vi. 8.

² Psalm cxxxviii. 6.

³ Prov. iii. 34.

“lowly is wisdom¹:” that “a man’s pride
 “shall bring him low: but honour shall
 “uphold the humble in spirit²,” and that
 “before honour is humility³.” Again, “a
 “proud look” “doth the Lord hate⁴,” and
 “every one that is proud in heart is an abo-
 “mination to the Lord⁵.” And the prophet
 assures us, that “the day of the Lord of
 “hosts shall be upon every one that is proud
 “and lifted up, and he shall be brought low.”
 “The lofty looks of a man shall be humbled,
 “and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed
 “down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted
 “in that day⁶.”

When our blessed Lord entered upon the public exercise of his ministry, and went forth, teaching and preaching the kingdom of God, he appears to have begun his divine instructions with the virtue of humility. “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed
 “are the meek. Blessed are ye when men
 “shall revile you, and shall say all manner
 “of evil against you falsely, for my sake⁷ :” now nothing is more repugnant to our natural pride, than to be evil spoken of. When the workings of human pride showed themselves in the disciples of the lowly Jesus, he

¹ Prov. xi. 2. ² Prov. xxix. 23. ³ Prov. xviii. 12.

⁴ Prov. vi. 17. 16. ⁵ Prov. xvi. 5. ⁶ Isaiah ii. 12. 11.

⁷ Matt. v.

“ called a little child, and set him in the
 “ midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto
 “ you, except ye be converted, and become
 “ as little children, ye shall not enter into
 “ the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, there-
 “ fore,” he continues, “ shall humble him-
 “ self”—it was in *humility*, especially, that
 their conversion was to be shown—“ whoso-
 “ ever, therefore, shall humble himself as this
 “ little child, the same is greatest in the king-
 dom of heaven¹.” In other words, the
 humblest man is the best Christian.

We are repeatedly told, that our Lord
 gave us an example that we should follow
 his steps². All parts of his example that are
 imitable by man, we shall do well to follow ;
 his piety to God for instance, his persever-
 ance in prayer, his purity, his temperance,
 his compassion—but what is the part of his
 character, which he himself particularly pro-
 poses to our imitation?—his *humility and*
meekness. “ Learn of me, for I am meek
 “ and lowly in heart.” It was to place his
 humility in the most striking point of view,
 for the imitation of his followers, that he
 gave that wonderful instance of condescen-
 sion in washing his disciples’ feet. And the
 whole history of his life, and still more, if
 possible, that of his death, is one continued
 display of humility and meekness. The

¹ Matt. xviii. 1—4.

² 1 Pet. ii. 21.

apostles repeatedly call us to this imitation of our Saviour, and bid us to let that mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, who condescended so low for our sakes, as to take upon him the nature of man, and suffer death upon the cross. They enforce the same lesson in a variety of other passages. When St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called, to live as became Christians indeed, what is the *first* virtue which he recommends? *humility*—"all lowliness and meekness¹." And in like manner he exhorts the Colossians, to "put on humbleness of mind²," as a leading characteristic of the new man, the real Christian.

Humility, therefore, being of such importance in the Christian scheme, it behoves *us* to consider how far we are actuated by this heavenly grace. Have *we* "put on humbleness of mind?" have we acquired a lowly temper of soul? are we "clothed with humility?" are we humble in our behaviour both towards God and man? With respect to God—do we humbly feel our dependance upon him for every thing? are we thankful for his mercies, earnest in our prayers, contented in our stations, and resigned under trials and afflictions? are we deeply impressed with the sense of our spiritual wants,

¹ Eph. iv. 2.² Col. iii. 12.

with our need of a Redeemer, and a Sanctifier?

And thus in our behaviour towards men;—do we show that we are duly sensible of our own faults and follies, and ready to make allowance for those of others? are we ready, as far as possible, to give up our own wills and opinions? are we free from envy and jealousy? slow to take offence, and ready to forgive and pass over a transgression? In particular; how do we bear to be told of our faults? it is an act of kindness in any one to point out to us where we are wrong. If on such an occasion we feel our spirit rise within us,—if, instead of acknowledging ourselves in the wrong when we really are so, we immediately begin to frame excuses, and to justify ourselves—we have reason to fear, that we have much of pride remaining within us. So again, how do we feel when we hear another praised, especially for some quality in which we imagine ourselves to excel? Do we feel no lurking wish to lessen the praise bestowed upon him? Do we never feel a sort of uneasiness, as if he was eclipsing our reputation? Surely, there can hardly be a stronger proof of our being wanting in humility. My friends, let me entreat you to endeavour by all the means in your power, and especially by fervent prayer for God's grace, to cultivate a genuine spirit of Christian humility, both in

yourselves, and in your children: check in both all those feelings of vanity, all those risings, of the pride of our corrupted nature, which would tend to produce envy and discontent, and anger and repining against God. Be humble and modest both in mind, and in outward behaviour. Let your dress, your speech, your general manner, be expressive of lowliness. Be on your guard against all appearance of vanity and ostentation, and be very backward in speaking of any thing which may redound to your own praise. The wise man observes, “most men “will proclaim every one his own goodness¹.” But his advice is, “Let another man praise “thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, “and not thine own lips²,”—“not he that “commendeth himself is approved, but whom “the Lord commendeth³.” This praise of himself lowers him in the sight both of God and man.

Be ready to give up your own wills, and wishes, and opinions. Consider how much harm you know of yourself, compared with what you know of other persons. “In lowliness of mind,” therefore, “let each esteem “other better than themselves⁴,” and himself least, and most undeserving of all. “All “of you be subject one to another, and be

¹ Prov. xx. 6.² 2 Cor. x. 18.³ Prov. xxvii. 2.⁴ Phil. ii. 3.

SERMON XVIII.

THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

MATT. xxii. 39.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

THE great foundation of all the duties between man and man is *love*. The love of our neighbour, accordingly, is one of the most important subjects that can engage our attention. In treating of this duty, I mean,

First, to say a few words upon its importance, nature, and extent ;

Secondly, to point out the manner in which it ought to show itself, some of its various acts and offices ;

And Thirdly, to lay before you some additional motives for cultivating this lovely feature of the Christian character, together with a few hints of advice on the means of acquiring it.

By the term *neighbour*, as used in the New Testament, we are to understand, not

merely those who happen to reside near to us, but all men who come within our reach, all to whom we can do either good or harm, and, most especially, all our fellow Christians.

The divine Author of our religion represents the love of our neighbour as being the distinguishing mark—the *badge* or *characteristic*—of his true followers. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another¹ :” and in the same spirit, his beloved disciple St. John says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren².” *The love of the brethren*, he lays down as the sign or token, by which we may know that we are in a Christian state ;—that “we have passed from death unto life.” And on the other hand, he affirms, “that he that loveth not his brother abideth in death,”—is in a state of condemnation, of alienation from God. Our Lord in his public ministry represents the precept, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” as second in authority and rank, only to that first great commandment which requires the love of God ; and tells us, that these two precepts comprise the sum and substance of the moral law ; On these two commandments hang all “the law and the prophets.” In like manner St. Paul repeatedly asserts, that “love is

¹ John xiii. 35.

² 1 John iii. 14.

“the fulfilling of the law¹ ;” and, after particularly mentioning the principal laws of the second table—those laws which relate to our duty towards our neighbour—says, that each of these, “and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” So again, in the first Epistle to Timothy, he speaks of *love*, as being the great object and end of all the moral precepts of religion. Now the end of the commandment is *charity*—(which is merely another word for love,)—“the end of the commandment is *charity*, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned².” And thus, in that beautiful and well-known chapter in the first Epistle of the Corinthians³, he tells us, that without charity or love, the most splendid gifts and endowments, and the most noble actions, are, with respect to salvation, absolutely profitless, absolutely good for nothing.

Such in the Christian religion is the importance of *love*, of a principle of real goodwill or benevolence. And this goodwill we are to feel towards *men in general*. Not that we are required to love all persons in the same degree. It is strictly in the order of nature and of providence, that those who are connected with us by relationship, or by any

¹ Rom. xiii. 8. 10. ² 1 Tim. i. 5. ³ 1 Cor. xiii.

similar tie, should possess more of our attachment than others. And common consent requires, not without reason, that we should feel a greater interest in our own countrymen than in foreigners; and in those who dwell near us,—who are our neighbours in the common sense of the term,—than in those who reside at a distance. Those also who are most distinguished for goodness and amiable qualities, are proper objects of *higher* degrees of our regard. But still, our love must be extended to *all* mankind, without exception; we must bear good-will to *all*, and wish and strive to promote the comfort and well-being of *all*, as opportunity is offered to us. Even those at variance with us are not excepted. Our Saviour expressly commands us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us; to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us¹. Those also, who have disgraced themselves by their vices, have a claim to our regard. While we hate and abhor the *sin*, we may and must feel kindness for the *sinner*. His sin, indeed, renders him a fit object for the sincerest pity and compassion. And this good-will towards mankind we must feel in the highest degree possible. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as *thyself*.” That we should love other men

¹ Matt. v. 44.

to regulate our *practice* is, that we should in all cases *do as we would be done by*. As the precept in the text enjoins the inward principle of love, so the rule just mentioned points out the manner in which that principle should influence the outward conduct. For instance, the love which we bear to ourselves makes us unwilling to be injured in our property, our persons, or our good name. We should be equally unwilling in any of these instances to injure another. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour," says the apostle; "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law¹." And this extends, not only to those greater instances of injustice mentioned by St. Paul from the laws of the second table, such as murder, adultery, theft, and false witness, but to all others of whatever description. As we do not love pain ourselves, so we shall be careful never in any way to give *needless* pain to another. As, when speaking of him to a third person, we shall be on our guard against injuring his character, except when the claims of justice clearly require it; so in our intercourse with him, we must be careful not to say or do any thing which may uselessly hurt his feelings, especially, we shall be watchful against any appearance of treating him with *contempt*. If ever in our intercourse with those, whom, in compliance with

¹ Rom. xiii. 10.

the habits of society, we consider as beneath us, we are tempted by the corrupt pride of our hearts to behave as if we slighted and despised them, we should correct ourselves in the words of Job; "Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?" There are few things which we feel more acutely and painfully ourselves, than any expression of contempt; and there is nothing to which even the poorest among men are more alive. Let us reflect how we behave when in the presence of a superior, of a man whom we wish to please, for the sake of some interest of our own, or merely for the sake of his countenance. How careful are we to do nothing which may offend or displease him! How strictly—to adopt a common expression—are we *upon our good behaviour*? If we are influenced by Christian charity and Christian humility, we shall not be less upon our good behaviour, less fearful of giving unnecessary pain, when in the presence of the least and lowest of our fellow men.

But the love of our neighbour will not only restrain us from injuring him, or giving him needless pain; it will also induce us to do him all the good in our power; to promote his welfare and comfort, and, as far as we can, to relieve his wants both of body and soul.

¹ Job xxxi. 15.

As the interests of the latter are of inexpressibly the greatest importance, we should be most anxious for *them*: and should show such anxiety, when we have any prospect of being of use by so doing. His temporal necessities we must relieve as far as our means fairly extend; but must endeavour *so* to relieve them, as not to encourage any evil habits of improvidence, or of undue dependence on the aid of others. And especially, we must seek for opportunities of making the relief imparted to the wants of the *body*, the means of doing spiritual good to the *soul*, the necessities of which are the more dangerous, in proportion as they are less sensibly felt. Perhaps no duty is inculcated in the Scriptures more earnestly, than the duty of ministering to the wants of our fellow-creatures. The passages relating to it are numberless, and will readily occur to you. That in St. John's first Epistle is very strong; “Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him¹?” If we can give nothing else, we must at least give them our sympathy and our prayers.

And not only on greater emergencies, but in all the common intercourse of life, the same spirit of good-will will make a man *kind* and *obliging* to all about him, in words, in

¹ 1 John iii. 17.

look, and in manner. He will strive to promote their ease and comfort, and will be ready to perform many little offices of attention, of small value in themselves, but important as showing the spirit from which they proceed. We are enjoined by St. Peter to be '*courteous*'; that is, in other words, to be *civil*. None of you will venture to say that any injunction of holy Scripture can be of slight importance. Remember then, that we have the authority of St. Peter for considering *courtesy*, or *civility*, as a *Christian duty*. Certainly civility is a necessary fruit of the love of our neighbour; and the neglect of civility proceeds generally from pride and uncharitableness, and often leads on to much heart-burning, and bitterness of spirit. A man duly influenced by the Christian temper, will, consequently, be *courteous* or *civil* to all with whom he has any intercourse. At the same time, however, he must be cautious not to suffer his courtesy, or unwillingness to offend, to induce him to *flatter* any man in his faults, or in the slightest degree to be unmindful of the interests of religion and truth. The Christian rule, as laid down by St. Paul, is this; "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good, to edification²." *Please his neighbour for his good*. We are always to have in view his spiritual good and his *edifi-*

¹ 1 Peter iii. 18. •

² Rom. xv. 2.

eration, his advancement in holiness. If at any time we so please men, as to encourage them in their vices, so as to be negligent of our duty to God, we are no longer the servants of Christ¹. But, if we occasionally have to blame some parts of their conduct,—plainly “to set before them the things that they have done,” still we must never forget the rules of *Christian courtesy*. Consider how you feel and act with respect to your *friends*:—how careful you are of their reputation when absent,—how anxious not to pain or offend them—not to hurt their feelings—when present. And ought we not, if we are Christians, to feel and to act, in some degree at least, in the same manner towards men in general? So again, with respect to our *friends*, we enter into all their joys and sorrows, increasing the former, and softening the latter, by our sympathy. And ought we not, in a similar manner, to sympathize with all who come within our reach and notice? ought we not, according to the apostolical rule, to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep²?”

III. I readily acknowledge, that the acquiring of this spirit of constant and universal benevolence, and the habit of continually practising all its various acts and offices, is a work of no little difficulty. The great step

¹ Gal. i. 10.

² Rom. xii. 15.

in order to it is to conquer the *selfishness* of our nature. All men are too apt “to seek “their *own*” exclusively; to be so occupied with themselves and their own concerns, as to have no room left in their hearts for others. But charity is not *selfish*. A well-regulated attention to our own interests, is not only allowable, but necessary,—necessary even as a part of charity. We must not however so attend to ourselves, as to be inattentive to the interests and wishes of others.

There is perhaps no lesson which it is more important to learn, than the lesson of subduing our own *wills*; the lesson of making our own humours, and inclinations, and even our interests, give place on fit occasions, to those of other men. Children cannot learn the art of giving up to others, too early; and grey-headed old men have generally room for improvement in it. Nothing is of more consequence to our own happiness, and to the preservation of the principle of benevolence. We must strive also to eradicate—to root out—the evil pride of our corrupted nature. “Only of pride cometh contention,” and where pride is subdued, the great occasion of quarrels and soreness of spirit is entirely removed. Envy, hatred, and malice must also be banished from the bosom which means to be governed by Christian charity. And every

one who knows what uneasy and painful inmates of the breast these malevolent affections are, and how they embitter life, will feel that this alone is a most powerful argument for endeavouring to acquire the spirit of benevolence.

Another argument for cultivating this general spirit of good-will may be drawn from the consideration, that we are all the work of the same Creator, that we all descend from the loins of the same earthly father, and are all partakers of the same common nature. “Hath not one God created us¹?” says the Scripture; or, as it is in the passage of Job, which I before quoted, “did not he that made me in the womb, make him? did not one fashion us in the womb?” Yes, verily; and God “hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth².” Consequently, we are all *relations*;—“all we are brethren;” and should look on each other as another self.

But we not only partake of the same nature, but of the same *sinful* nature; and are consequently exposed by nature to one common condemnation. The circumstance of being *fellow-sufferers*, of being companions in danger or distress, or misery, is generally found to be a strong bond of union, a great promoter of kind and friendly feelings. Let

¹ Mal. ii. 10.

² Acts xvii. 26.

the thought that we are by nature fellow-heirs of sin, and suffering, and death, have the effect of filling us with sentiments of kindness towards each other. But as we have been partners in guilt and condemnation, so, God be praised! are we partakers also of one common redemption. As God formed of one blood all the men that dwell on the earth, so by the blood of *one* were all men redeemed. Christ “tasted death for every “man:” *every man*, therefore, may have an interest in the blood of Christ; and as such, has the strongest claim to our kindness and regard. If we hope ourselves to be benefited by the sufferings of our Redeemer, let us take heed how we withhold either the feeling or the expression of good-will from a brother—however poor or weak—“for whom Christ “died¹.” Remember, that our Lord himself proposes the love which he showed to us, as a pattern for us to follow; “a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one “another; *as I have loved you*².” What was the instance that he gave of his love? *He died for our sakes*. Certainly, “greater love “hath no man than this, that a man lay down “his life for his friends³.” He laid down his life for us, when we were not friends, but enemies; enemies through wicked works. And does it not follow, that if Christ so loved

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 11.² John xiii. 34.³ John xv. 13.

us, we also ought to love one another? Does it not follow, as St. John argues, if Christ so loved us, as to lay down his life for us, we also ought to be prepared, if necessary, "to lay down our lives for the brethren¹?"

God is the centre of all perfection, and we are humbly to try to imitate such of his perfections as are imitable by us: "Be ye holy, as God is holy:" "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect²." But he particularly requires us to imitate him in his *love to mankind*. The Lord is good to every man, and "his mercies are over all his works." He is kind, even "to the unthankful and to the evil³," "and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust⁴." Let his example induce us to bear good-will to all men, even to those who least deserve it at our hands. It is thus that we shall, through the merits of Christ, become "the children of the Highest⁵."

My friends, let these and the like considerations prevail with us, to do all that we can, to cultivate in our bosoms a general spirit of love and good-will towards men in general; more especially towards those with whom we have most intercourse. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from

¹ 1 John iii. 16.

² Matt. v. 48.

³ Luke vi. 35.

⁴ Matt. v. 45.

⁵ Luke vi. 35.

“you, with all malice: and be ye kind one
“to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one
“another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath
“forgiven you¹.” Endeavour, above all things,
to “put on charity, which is the bond of per-
“fectness² ;” to “have fervent charity among
“yourselves³ ;” and strive unceasingly to “love
“one another with a pure heart fervently⁴,”
and with “love unfeignedly⁵.” And since in
this great work we cannot hope to succeed
without divine aid, let us implore God by his
Spirit to pour into our hearts that most ex-
cellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace
and of all virtue, without which whosoever
liveth is counted dead before him⁶.

¹ Eph. iv. 31, 32.

² Col. iii. 14.

³ 1 Pet. iv. 8.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 22.

⁵ 2 Cor. vi. 6.

⁶ See Collect for Quinquagesima Sunday.

SERMON XIX.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH.

EPH. iv. 25.

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.”

THE method which St. Paul adopts in several of his Epistles, is, first, to lay before his converts an affecting statement of the blessings to which they were admitted by their conversion to Christianity; and then, from that statement, to infer the necessity of corresponding holiness of practice. This is especially observable in the Epistle to the Ephesians. In the verses immediately preceding my text, he considers them as having *put off the old man*, as having renounced, as having forsaken, the evil passions and guilty practices to which they before had been addicted; and as having “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;”—as having upon

their admission to the *privileges* of the Gospel, engaged to acquire—as having, in some degree, actually acquired—the *moral graces* of the Gospel. It is worthy of remark, that the very first virtue, by which the apostle enjoins them to show, that they “really” had put off the old man, that they were Christians not in name only, but in reality, in veracity, or a strict adherence to truth. “Wherefore”—as the natural consequence of what had been just said,—“Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.” Exactly in the same manner, and in the same connexion, he says to the Colossians, “Lie not one to another;” and enforces the precept by the same consideration, “seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds¹.” *Lying* is the sin of man in his state of native corruption, of a man unrenewed by the Holy Ghost; but is utterly unbecoming a Christian, utterly unworthy of him who professes to have put on the *new man*.

My friends, these passages are applicable to us, as well as to the Ephesians or the Colossians. We, like them, have been admitted to the privileges of the Gospel; we, like them, have engaged to put off the old man with his deeds. “Wherefore,” from the consideration just mentioned, “putting away

¹ Coloss. iii. 9.

“lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.”

Lying consists in speaking falsely with an intention to deceive. The intention to deceive seems to form the essence of this sin; for where there is no such intention, a man is hardly to be deemed guilty of *lying*. This may be said with reference to tales confessedly fictitious, and to fables and parables, such as are used in Scripture and in other books for the purpose of instruction. And when a man states what he *believes* to be true, but afterwards is found to be false, he is not to be considered as a *liar*. Certainly, he is wrong in speaking without sufficient grounds; is guilty of a blameable heedlessness, and, to a degree, of falsehood; but still, is not chargeable with the guilt of deliberate lying. If what he said reflected upon any one's character, he has to answer for the additional fault of evil-speaking, and want of charity. And as a man may speak words, which in themselves are not strictly true, without being guilty of lying, because he has no intention to deceive; so the intention to deceive will fix this guilt upon him in some cases, where what he says is, to a certain degree, true. This is the case with all kinds of *equivocation*;—which sometimes have in them as much guilt as a direct lie; perhaps even more, inasmuch as they show more cunning and contrivance. And so also the intention

to deceive, may render a man liable to the blame and punishment of lying, in some cases, where no words are used at all; for a man may be guilty of this sin by deceitful actions, as well as by deceitful words.

In the further prosecution of this subject, I shall,

First, consider some of the occasions on which men are guilty of this sin, and the motives which lead them to it.

And, Secondly, shall endeavour to make you sensible of its guilt.

I. First then;—some men *lie* in mere wantonness of spirit, for the sake, as they pretend, of amusing the company they are in, and for the purposes of acquiring to themselves the sort of consequence or importance, which seems to belong to those who can relate what others are ignorant of. Now the wise man tells us, that “in the multitude of “words there wanteth not sin¹”; and in the case which we have been supposing, the sin is rather increased than diminished, by the circumstance of its arising from so trifling, so pitiful a temptation.

In this, and in many like cases, men may perhaps say, that the falsehoods they uttered did no one any harm. But the mere violation of truth is a harm. Men have a just *right* to expect that truth shall be spoken to them; we all expect it ourselves. To be

¹ Prov. x. 19.

wilfully guilty of speaking falsehood, therefore, even when we do no other harm by it, is to be guilty of *injustice*, is to act contrary to the rule of doing as we would be done by.

Another not unfrequent instance of lying, is, when men lightly make promises, which, at the very time they make them, they have no intention of fulfilling; or when, though they once intended the performance, they yet neglect it afterwards. They are thus guilty of deceiving their neighbour, and of disappointing the expectations they have themselves raised. When a man has promised any thing, he has made himself a *debtor* to the extent of his promises, and is chargeable with positive injustice, if he does not perform it. Making the promise or not, was, in the first instance, a matter of choice; but when it is once made, he is bound to fulfil it. We may here apply what is said in Scripture of religious vows. "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay¹." If a man says, that he cannot perform his promise without inconvenience or loss to himself, he should remember, that it is one of the characteristics of a good man, "that he sweareth"—or, we may add, that he *promiseth*—"to his neighbour, and disappointeth him not, though it were to his own hindrance²." But then, on the

¹ Eccles. v. 5.

• ² Psalm xv. 5.

other hand, I would observe, that he is not to be regarded as a promise-breaker, who really intended the performance, but was *unavoidably* prevented; or he who failed in the fulfilment through the treachery of his memory. I would observe also, that men are too apt to interpret as a promise what was never intended as such; and to construe into a positive engagement, some general profession of good will, and of an intention to assist them. Those who thus claim promises, where none were made, are guilty themselves of a violation of truth; and if they call those whose assistance they expected *promise-breakers*, are chargeable also with the sin of slander or calumny.

This sin of slander is one of the worst kinds of untruth. A falsehood which is designed to hurt another man's character, is a lie of the very worst description; and exposes those who are guilty of it to the severest punishment. And as we must on no account *lower* a man's character by falsehood, so neither are we at liberty to *raise* it by such means. If we are guilty of ascribing to any one virtues which we know he does not possess, of bestowing upon him praises which he in no way deserves, we are guilty of that violation of truth which is expressed by the word *flattery*. Flattery is a sin, which not only is culpable as an instance of lying, but also as it tends to encourage vanity and

self-conceit ;—as it may induce him who is the object of it, to neglect the attainment of virtues, the credit of which he has already received :—and as it may discourage others, who see praise so lightly and unworthily bestowed. Remember the saying of Solomon : “ He that sayeth unto the wicked, Thou art righteous, him shall the people curse ; nations shall abhor him¹. ” But then I must remark here also, that this censure must not extend to certain expressions of civility, which are used, without any intention of deceiving, in compliance with custom, and for the preservation of the decencies and courtesies of life.

A very common occasion of falsehood,—and here I would request the particular attention of the younger part of my hearers,—of the children, and of those who have lately engaged in service,—is *the wish to conceal a fault*. A person, we will suppose, has been guilty of some real fault ; or perhaps is chargeable only with carelessness. The fear of blame, or of punishment, or perhaps a mere feeling of sinful pride, which prevents him from owning himself in the wrong, tempts him to endeavour to conceal it by a lie. He either flatly denies the charge, or invents some false story by way of excuse. Now there is no maxim better known, or

¹ Prov. xxiv. 24.

which ought to be more constantly remembered, than this, that *he who commits a fault and lies to hide it, makes it two*¹. The original fault was perhaps one, which, if it had been honestly acknowledged, would have been easily forgiven. By seeking to conceal it by falsehood, such persons bring upon themselves much shame and uneasiness of mind; they expose themselves to more severe blame and punishment from men, when they are found out,—as they generally are found out;—and what is worst of all, they grievously offend God, from whom they can conceal nothing. And here I would request both parents and superiors, when a fault is committed and fairly acknowledged, not to be very severe and harsh in reproof or punishment;—but to let that severity be shown and *felt*, where there is any attempt to hide it by a lie.

Another occasion on which falsehood is too often employed, is, in the sale and purchase of various articles of convenience or luxury. It is observed by the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus, that “sin sticketh close between buying and selling;” and, I fear, that the sin of lying especially, sometimes finds place in matters of dealing and traffic. When it is employed by the buyer for the purpose of obtaining goods at a price

¹ Watts's songs. • ² Eccles. xxvii. 2.

below their fair worth, or by the seller with a view to enhance their value, it becomes doubly sinful. It becomes falsehood and dishonesty, in other words, lying and stealing, united together.

I by no means pretend to enumerate all the many occasions or instances of lying; perhaps those which I have mentioned are among the most frequent. I will now go on to offer some remarks upon its sinfulness.

II. The sinfulness of this unworthy vice, is strongly suggested to us by the words of the text. "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." And why? What *reason* does St. Paul give for this precept? The reason follows in the same verse; "For we are members one of another." *We are members one of another*, and therefore should upon no account deceive, but should be influenced, in all our intercourse with each other, by a uniform regard to truth.

We are members one of another, as we are partakers of one common nature, and formed to live together in society, which could not subsist without truth. If truth were generally disregarded, the bonds of society would be broken; mutual confidence would be destroyed; we should not know whom to trust: and should fall into the deplorable state described by the prophet Jeremiah: "Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother

“will utterly supplant, and every neighbour
“will walk with slanders. And they will
“deceive every one his neighbour, and will
“not speak the truth; they have taught
“their tongue to speak lies, and weary them-
“selves to commit iniquity¹.” This, my
friends, is the description of people, who,
having lost the fear of God, have thrown off
all regard for truth:—and a most deplorable
picture it is.

Again: the proper use of language is the
communication of our thoughts: and, as
members of society, we are under an implied
compact or agreement, that our words shall
really mean what they express. If we wil-
fully utter falsehood, we break this compact
or agreement, and abuse the gift of speech,
that gift by which we are distinguished from
the brute creation. We are guilty, in fact,
of a sort of injustice, of a violation of the
natural rights of those, with whom we have
intercourse.

“We are,” however, “members one of
“another,” not only as we are partakers of a
common nature, and are members of society,
but much more “as we are fellow-Christians.
“We are members one of another,” because
we are members of the body of Christ; and
this sacred relation, as it unites us most
closely together, so it makes it peculiarly in-

¹ Jer. ix. 4, 5.

cumbent upon us, that we should “ speak every man truth with his neighbour.” When we were admitted into this holy society, we engaged to have this regard for truth. We then renounced the devil and all his works; and no sin is more peculiarly the work of the devil than *lying*; for, as our Saviour tells us, “ *he is a lie and the father of it*¹.”

Let us consider too, that we were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that the relation which we bear to *each* is utterly inconsistent with falsehood. The glorious Being, among whose children and servants we were then enrolled, is emphatically styled the “ God of truth;” a God, who cannot lie, all whose words are faithful and true, who is essential truth itself. If we wish to be his children, we must be “ children that will not lie².” So again, we profess to be the disciples of Jesus Christ. But let us reflect, that he was the “ faithful and true witness,” who “ came to bear witness to the *truth*,” and in whose mouth no guile was found. *We* must walk in truth, if we would be his disciples indeed. The Holy Spirit also, by whose guidance all true Christians are conducted, is the Spirit of truth. If we profess to be led by him, we must be careful

¹ John viii. 44.

² Isaiah lxiii. 8.

to live according to his direction, and to bring forth his fruits; and the fruit of the Spirit is found “in all righteousness and “truth.”

Accordingly, the servants of God have always been distinguished by their regard for *truth*. It was one of the injunctions of the Jewish lawgiver, “Ye shall not—deal falsely, “neither lie one to another¹.” In the book of Proverbs we are told that, “lying lips are “abomination to the Lord: but they that “deal truly are his delight².” Holy David, in the fifteenth Psalm, lays it down as one of the marks or characteristics of an inhabitant of the heavenly Jerusalem—of him, “who shall “ascend the hill of the Lord,”—that “he “hath used no deceit with his tongue,” but “speaketh the truth from his heart.” Of himself the Psalmist says, “as for lies, I hate “and abhor them; he that telleth lies shall “not tarry in my sight.”

From what I have said, you will, I trust, sufficiently perceive that lying is a sin—as it is a violation of natural justice, a violation of the implied agreement, the fair understanding, that our words shall express the real truth;—that it is a sin most hateful to the God of truth;—a sin utterly inconsistent with the Christian profession, utterly unworthy of

¹ Levit. xix. 11.

² Prov. xii. 22.

the Christian character;—that it is, in short, a sin, which is a direct and gross violation of our baptismal vow.

And if the sinfulness of lying is so great and so evident, no doubt its punishment will be severe. “He that speaketh lies shall not “escape¹ ;”—shall not escape shame and punishment both in this world and the next. Even in this world the liar is the object of scorn and contempt; so much so, that, to call a man by this hateful appellation—in common language *to give a man the lie*—is generally looked upon as one of the sorest affronts that can be offered. And as the liar is the object of contempt, so he cuts himself off from all the advantages of society. No one will trust him; and he can hardly obtain belief, even when he speaks truth. And in the world to come, his punishment will be awful indeed. We are assured in the book of Revelations, that “whosoever loveth and “maketh a lie” shall be for ever shut out from the heavenly Jerusalem, together with murderers and idolaters; and again, that “all “liars shall have their part in the lake of fire “and brimstone, which is the second death².” Having behaved like the children of the father of lies while on earth, and done his works, they will hereafter share his punishment.

¹ Prov. xix. 9.

² Rev. xxi. 8.

I will not pretend to add any thing more to the passage of Scripture which I have just quoted. Nothing can be stronger or more awakening. Let us, my friends, both from the dread of these awful sufferings, and from a sense of what is required of us by our Christian hopes and Christian profession,—and above all from a filial love and obedience to the God of *truth*,—be unceasingly careful to “put away” lying, and to speak every man truth with his “neighbour.”

You who have children, take care to bring them up with a strict regard to truth. Make them understand very early, that you can pass over almost any fault rather than a lie; and that, if they attempt to conceal a fault by a falsehood, they will bring upon themselves your severest displeasure. Do not allow them to get into a habit of lying in jest. Maintain, on your part, a constant attention to truth. Never make use of deceit, as a means of procuring their obedience, but set them in all things an example of Christian truth and Christian simplicity.

Let us all, finally, endeavour to acquire the habit of “speaking the truth in love;” of being guided in our intercourse with each other by a spirit of open frankness, of simplicity, and godly sincerity. And since some impediment to this will arise from the remains of our native corruption, from the old man not being perfectly and entirely put off,

let us fervently seek the assistance of God ;—let us beg him to take from us the way of lying, and to cause us to make much of his law ;—let us implore the Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth,—into a habit of truth in our intercourse with each other, as well as to the knowledge of religious truth,—and keep us in the ways of truth and holiness.

PRAYER.

O Lord, the God of truth, who hatest a lie as being the work of the great enemy, instil into our souls such an unalterable love of truth, that no temptation may lead us into the ways of falsehood. Let our hearts and tongues always go together ; and keep far from us all manner of deceit, either in words or actions. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of him who came to bear witness to the truth, thy Son Jesus Christ.

SERMON XX.

HONESTY.

EPH. iv. 28.

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”

HONESTY is a virtue, which holds a high place in the estimation, even of those who are little influenced by religion. If not always scrupulously attentive to this virtue themselves, they still wish to see it observed by all other men. To the character of a real Christian it is absolutely necessary. Indeed, to speak of a *dishonest Christian*, would be a sort of contradiction in terms. St. Paul accordingly, when laying before the Ephesians some of the principal virtues which it became them to practise, now that they were become Christians, now that they had put the new man, makes early mention of *honesty*. “Let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may

“hath to give to him that needeth.” Far from depriving another of what belongs to him, sincere Christians—even those who have least—even those who labour for what they get—will be glad to impart what they can to the necessities of others. I would here remark, by the way, that if St. Paul exhorts even those who support themselves by labour, to be ready to give to him that needeth, how much more forcibly are *they* called upon to give who have this world’s goods in abundance! If they who have but little should gladly give of that little, certainly they who have much ought to give plentifully¹;—should give largely, though still with such sound judgment and discretion, as may prevent what they give from encouraging a habit of dependance, or any sort of idleness or profligacy. Upon this part of the verse, however, I shall not now enlarge, but shall confine myself to the former part of it, “Let him that stole steal no more.”

This caution of the apostle against *stealing*, as well as the eighth commandment, must be considered as forbidding us, in whatever manner, to deprive another, against his will, of that which belongs to him. Where this deprivation of his property is attended with outrage and violence, or when it is accompanied with breach of trust, or the violation

¹ Tobit iv.

of positive engagements, these and the like circumstances are so many aggravations of guilt, which call for severer punishment. In every instance, however, in which we knowingly take from another that which he is lawfully possessed of, or keep back from him, without his consent, that which is his due, we act contrary to the spirit of the precept in the text.

The full consideration of this precept, consequently, might lead us to take notice of every species of fraud and dishonesty, that has been invented by the mischievous ingenuity, and practised by the ill-directed dexterity, of fallen man. These, however, are unhappily so various in their forms, and so many in number, that it would be an endless labour to recount them all. I shall, therefore, only mention such violations of this injunction, as, either from their frequency, or from their being thoughtlessly considered and spoken of as light and trifling offences, seem most to require it.

And first, I wish to direct your attention to what are called *little or petty thefts*. I say *little or petty* thefts, because I will not suppose that any of you who are present would be guilty of the higher and more daring kinds of stealing. Now with regard to *little thefts*, I most readily allow, that there are some things so insignificant in value, that they are, by common usage and consent, left for who-

ever will be at the trouble of collecting them. To take, and apply to our own use, such things as these, is not to be considered as a violation of the divine law; for the consent of the owner may be fairly presumed. In every case, however, which does not clearly fall under the above description of being allowed by common consent and usage, no one ought to venture to take any thing, however trifling he may think it in value, without honestly asking his own conscience, whether he would equally take it if the owner were present and looking on. If he would not, or if he has any doubt upon the subject, he must refrain from it, till his doubts are removed by asking and receiving permission. Asking leave, indeed, is, generally speaking, so ready a way of removing such doubt, that recourse to it ought to be had in every case where the doubt exists. If you neither have leave, nor feel satisfied that you *would* have it, you cannot take any thing, however small its value, without being guilty of stealing.

It is plain, that such leave of the owner, though, generally speaking, it may fairly be presumed in the case of *dead wood* broken off by the violence of the wind, cannot be in any degree supposed in the taking of wood,—either when actually growing,—or when cut by the owner,—or when applied to fencing or other purposes. To steal wood in any of these or the like circumstances, is an

offence, against which peculiar punishments are enacted by the laws of this country, and is a direct violation of the laws of God. In most cases of *wood stealing*, the lawful owner is injured, not merely to the amount of what is stolen, but sometimes to an extent which can hardly be repaired. He that steals or destroys wood actually growing, for instance, is, in fact, responsible for what it would have increased to if suffered to remain: and, consequently, if it was of such description as would have become *timber*, he exposes himself to temporal punishment of a very heavy nature¹. Thus again, if the wood was applied to the purpose of fencing, for the protection of the produce of the soil from cattle or other injury, he who steals it is in conscience answerable, not merely for the value of the wood taken, but for all the harm or loss, which, in consequence of its being taken, is sustained. If you say that the wood is of no value, of no consequence, ask yourselves fairly whether you would venture to take it

¹ It may be right to remark, that the *wood-stealer* is particularly exposed to punishment. His conviction is easier than that of any other thief. In other cases of theft, it is generally necessary, that the owner should be able to swear to his property; but this is not the case with wood. Any person carrying a burden of wood, or having wood in his possession which is supposed to be stolen, may be required to give account where he got it; and if his account is not satisfactory, may be punished, even though the owner of the wood is unknown.

if you knew that the owner of it saw you. If you would *not*, be assured, that you do wrong in taking it,—in plain words, are guilty of stealing. The want of fuel, no doubt, is oftentimes a serious evil, an evil which they who have it in their power ought to be anxious to remedy. But a Christian ought to submit to this or to any other evil, rather than violate the laws of his Maker. Religion calls upon us to part with a right hand, or a right eye, or even with life itself, rather than offend God. It allows you, and requires you, to love your families, and to provide for them; but it does not allow you to love them more than the Almighty. If you break God's laws in order to provide necessities for them, you not only expose your own souls to ruin, but act as if you wished to turn away God's blessing from your families. At the same time, you show that you do not put your trust in God, who has promised to provide his servants with all that is really needful.

But it is not only by direct stealing, that the precept in the text is broken; it is broken by every kind of wilful fraud and dishonesty.

In *dealing in traffic* there is much occasion for caution on this head. "Sin," says the son of Sirach, "sticketh close between buying and selling." If, for instance, the seller takes advantage of the ignorance or

necessities of the buyer to exact from him an exorbitant and unfair price ; if he, knowingly, sells articles of a worse quality than he pretends them to be of, or purposely conceals any defects or imperfections in them ; he offends against the injunction in the text. To give a quantity less either in weight or in measure than he is paid for, is clearly the same as robbing the buyer of so much money, and is an offence against which there are especial provisions in the Old Testament. “ Ye shall do no unrighteousness in weight “ or in measure, just balances” and “ just “ weights shall ye have ¹ ;” “ for all that do “ such things, and all that do unrighteously, “ are an abomination to the Lord thy God ² .”

And as a poor man—as indeed any man—has just cause to complain, if he receives in weight or in measure less than he pays for ; so, in his turn, does he give just cause of complaint against himself, if he gives less *work* than he is paid for performing. As he feels himself injured if a shop-keeper gives him a few ounces less than he ought to have, so is he himself guilty of dishonesty, if he gives to work an hour or two less than the time for which he is hired. If he is employed by the day, he has sold to his employer such a quantity of his time. If he wastes any part of that time, or takes for refreshment a

¹ Lev. xix. 35, 36.

² Deut. xxv. 16.

larger portion of it than is reasonable, or than is allowed by the custom of the country where he works, he defrauds his employer of so much time; which, since his time is paid for in money, is the same as defrauding him of so much money. If, again, a man is hired to perform a certain task of work for a certain price, and neglects to perform that task to the best of his ability;—if for the sake of dispatch, and of increasing the *measure* of his work, he does it slightly and imperfectly, he is guilty of similar dishonesty. There is one case, in which this careless manner of doing work is particularly injurious. The case I mean is, where men are employed to thresh out grain, do not take pains effectually to separate it from the ear. If wilfully guilty of this neglect, they not only wrong their employers, but they also deprive the country at large of a part of the food intended for its subsistence.

On the other hand, if the buyer takes advantage of the ignorance, or of the necessities of the seller, to induce him to part with his property at a less price than it is really worth; or if a master exacts from servants or labourers more work than they are well able to perform, or more than by the custom of the place he has a right to expect from them; if, having engaged to feed them, he neglects to give them sufficient food; or if

he refuses to pay their wages when they are demanded, and justly due; in all such and the like cases the law of *honesty* is violated, and an offence committed against the golden rule of *doing as we would be done by*.

Knowingly to pass bad money is so evidently the same thing as stealing to the pretended value of the money, that it is almost superfluous to mention it as a flagrant and direct offence against the divine law.

And here I must not omit saying a few words upon the payment of debts. In this country it is the custom to deal much upon trust or credit, and in many cases this custom has its advantages. It would, however, be for the benefit of all parties, if it were much less prevalent than it is. There can, however, be no doubt that money which is due to any person for goods received from him, is to be looked upon as actually his property; and those who incur debts which they know that they are never likely to pay;—those, who do not use their best exertions to pay off the debts which they have incurred;—or who refuse or *resent* the just demands of their creditors;—are to be looked upon as guilty of dishonesty, as offenders against the precept of the apostle. To be angry with, or to reproach, a creditor, when he quietly asks for what is really his own, or to seek to injure him for it, is not only most

unreasonable and *senseless*, but also highly sinful in the sight of the God of truth and justice.

But possibly, there may be some persons, who would upon no account defraud or rob their neighbour, but think it no sin to defraud government, by evading the payment of some part of those duties and taxes, which have been lawfully imposed. I wish such persons to reflect, that from the moment any tax is thus imposed and has become due, it is to be looked upon as the property of the public at large. To evade the payment of it consequently is to defraud the *public*. And not only so, but as it is evident, that, if the taxes already imposed do not amount to what was expected from them, and are insufficient for the exigencies of the State, fresh duties must be levied; those who evade the payment of those already in existence, contribute to render additional taxes necessary, and to bring an additional burden upon those who pay them conscientiously. Such conduct is contrary to common honesty and to the injunction in the text, and contrary also to the express precepts of holy writ. "Render unto Cæsar," says our Saviour, speaking of the tribute-money, "the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's¹." *Render unto Cæsar the*

¹ Matt. xxi. 21.

things that are Cæsar's—that is, pay to the civil government, under the protection of which you live, the taxes imposed by it. And thus again the apostle; “Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom”¹.

Such are *some*—for I by no means pretend to enumerate all—but such are some of the many sins, which offend against the precept in the text, which are violations of *honesty*. I know not whether it is necessary to add, that all who in any manner assist or encourage those who are guilty of such offences;—those especially, who, though they do not actually steal themselves, yet *knowingly* receive or conceal things stolen by others;—participate in the guilt, and, both in this world and the next, expose themselves to the punishment of theft. “When thou sawest a thief,” says the Psalmist, “then thou consentedst with him.” And then he adds, a few verses after, “Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver”².

The consequences of all these offences are most formidable. Even in this world they are such, in most instances, as might be supposed sufficient to deter men from being guilty of them. It is true that some of the acts of dishonesty which I have mentioned

¹ Rom. xiii. 7.

² Ps. l. 18. 22.

are so frequently practised, that they are not always attended among men with the treatment which they merit. Generally speaking, however, you must be fully sensible, that he who is guilty of stealing or fraud, exposes himself to deserved shame, and contempt, and reproach; that his society is shunned; that he sometimes cuts himself off from the means of procuring a livelihood; and deprives himself of that protection and assistance, which sooner or later, are generally bestowed upon honest industry. Even if his dishonest practices are, for a time, attended with seeming success, yet from that he derives no real advantage, which can make amends to him for the loss of his character, of the respect of those among whom he lives, and of the inward peace of his own mind. At the best, he cannot long enjoy his dishonest gains, his wages of iniquity; and the time is rapidly approaching when he will lament his dishonesty from the bottom of his heart. "He that getteth riches," says the prophet, "and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool¹." At his *end* he will deeply feel that he has been guilty of the greatest *folly*; that he "has spent his labour for that which profiteth not," and has acquired wealth to his own hurt. For in the world

¹ Jer. xvii. 11.

to come, which he will then be about to enter, the consequences of his dishonesty will be most awful. We are repeatedly told that the thief—and under that general name may be comprehended all *wilful* violations of honesty—shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but shall have his part with those unhappy beings, who are doomed to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire.

In every point of view therefore, and upon every account, it is of the last importance to us both as men and as Christians,—as we value our character or our comfort in this world, or the salvation of our souls in the world to come,—to maintain an inflexible *honesty* of conduct, to be invariably just and true in all our dealings. In every part of our intercourse with each other, we should bear in mind the golden rule laid down by our Saviour: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.” In every transaction which in any degree relates to gain or profit; in every instance of conduct, which can in any way be referred to the principle of *honesty*;—particularly if unhappily we should be tempted to deprive another of his property, whether by open violence, or by secret fraud or pilfering;—we should put ourselves in his place, and consider fairly and impartially in what manner we should then expect, and think we had a right; to be treated, and upon

no account do that to another which we would not have done to ourselves. This, I must again repeat it, should be the invariable rule of our conduct towards men; and to those who walk by this rule, and in all other parts of their conduct are influenced by similar religious principles, peace be on them and mercy; and may they, through the merits and atonement of Christ, be numbered among the true Israel, the chosen of God.

THE PRAYER.

(From the Whole Duty of Man.)

O God of righteousness and justice, cleanse my heart and hands from all fraud and injustice, and give me perfect integrity and uprightness in all my dealings. Grant that I may most strictly observe that sacred rule, of doing as I would be done by. Make me careful to render to every one his due, and may so behave myself towards all, that none may have any evil thing to say of me; or, however, that I may by keeping innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is right, have peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXI.

ANGER.

EPH. iv. 26.

Be ye angry, and sin not : let not the sun go down
upon your wrath.

THERE is perhaps no passion of the human mind, which more requires to be carefully watched, and kept within strict bounds, than the passion of *anger*. None of you will dispute the truth of this assertion, when you consider the many and the great evils, which this passion occasions in the world,—when you think how it breaks the peace of society, destroys good neighbourhood, and ruins the harmony of families. At the same time, there is hardly any fault, which seems to occasion less shame and remorse, in those who are subject to it. Nothing is more common, than to hear persons who are in the habit of giving way to excessive violence of temper, treating it as a light and excusable failing. They acknowledge with a readiness, which

shows how little they are ashamed of it, that certainly they are apt to be *passionate*; that they are disposed to it by their constitution;—but that it is soon over, as they never *bear malice*. This idea, that they do not bear malice, seems to set them at ease, and they apparently feel no scruple in giving way to a passion, which, *in its excess*, is at variance with the express precepts, and with the whole spirit and genius, of the Christian religion.

The opposite quality to wrath or excessive anger, is *meekness*; and meekness is laid down, both by Christ and by his Apostles, as one of the leading graces of the Christian character. The former, near the beginning of his sermon on the mount, says, “Blessed “are the meek¹.” And soon after, in the same divine discourse, he warns us against the danger of causeless anger; “Whosoever “is angry with his brother without a cause “shall be in danger of the judgment².” In another place he proposes his own meekness as a pattern for us to follow—“learn of me; “for I am meek—*meek* and lowly in heart³.” St. Paul, when exhorting the Colossians to acquire the character of real Christians, enjoins them to “put off anger, wrath,” and “malice,” and to “put on meekness, long-

¹ Matt. v. 5.

² Matt. v. 22.

³ Matt. xi. 29.

“suffering,” and forbearance¹. And in the similar passage to the Ephesians, he cautions them in the words of the text, “Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath:” and again in the concluding verses of the chapter, “Let all bitterness, and *wrath*, and *anger*, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

It is my wish to enforce these precepts of Christ and of St. Paul. In order to which, I shall,

First, mention a few reasons for considering anger as not being absolutely sinful in itself:

I shall, secondly, point out some of the *very many* instances, in which it is sinful:

And shall conclude, by laying before you a few hints of advice, on the means of restraining this head-strong passion.

I. And, first, that anger is not in itself absolutely sinful, may be inferred both from the words of the text, and from the passage in the sermon on the mount already alluded to. When the apostle says, “be ye angry, and sin not;” we may at once conclude,

¹ Col. iii. 8. 12.

that it is very possible to be angry, without being guilty of sin; and the judgment denounced by our Saviour is not against all anger in whatever circumstances, but against *anger without cause*¹.

We infer too, that anger is not in itself sinful, from the circumstance, that God himself is repeatedly represented in Scripture as being angry. For though the supreme Being is not really subject to any *passion*, and all such representations are made merely in condescension to the weakness of our capacities, for the purpose of setting forth in a more lively manner the evil consequences of sin to those who are guilty of it; yet certainly such representations would not have been made, had anger been *in itself* absolutely sinful. Our blessed Lord during his ministry, "though in all points tempted as *we are*," was yet perfectly "without sin," but *he* appears to have been repeatedly influenced by a holy anger. At one time we are told, that he looked upon those about him "with anger, being grieved for the *hardness of their hearts*²." He appears to have been influenced by a zeal near akin to

¹ He is angry without sin, who is angry only on such occasions—with such persons—in such manner—at such time—and for such continuance—as he ought. *Abp. Secker*.

² Mark iii. 5.

anger, when he drove the money-changers from the temple ; and repeatedly, on other occasions, he was moved with indignation, or anger, at the hypocrisy and worldliness of the Jewish teachers. Many also of the most distinguished servants of God, both in the Old and in the New Testament, appear to have been influenced by this passion, not only without blame, but, humanly speaking, to their honour. Such was the anger of Moses, when he witnessed the low idolatry of the Israelites¹ ; such was the anger of David, against the murderers of Ishbosheth², and the lawless pride of the sons of Zeruiah ; such was the indignation of Nehemiah, against the transgressors of the divine law³ ; and such was the just anger of St. Paul on many occasions, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, or alluded to in his Epistles.

Anger (within due limits) is not only lawful, but right and praiseworthy, when it is occasioned by sincere zeal for the glory of God, and for the interests of religion ; or by a real regard for truth, justice, or mercy. As it is good to be “ zealously affected in a good thing⁴,” so it is good to be angry, when we see God dishonoured, his laws broken, the innocent wronged, or the poor oppressed. Though even on such occasions we should

¹ Exod. xxxii. 19.

² Nehemiah xiii.

² 2 Sam. iv.

⁴ Gal. iv. 18.

endeavour to be angry with the sin, rather than the sinner, for whom, as an erring *brother*, we should feel pity and compassion. And where we ourselves are wilfully wronged, it is not only natural, but right, that we should feel some emotions of resentment. This passion, indeed, appears to have been implanted in the original constitution of our nature, before it was corrupted by the fall, as the ready instrument of preventing or of repelling injury, and for the restraint of evil-doers.

But though in such instances as those above mentioned, anger is without sin, yet I fear it is sinful in nineteen out of twenty of the cases in which we give way to it. Some of them I will shortly notice.

II. Anger, then, is sinful, whenever it is excited against those persons or things, which are not the proper objects of it;—whenever it is excited entirely without cause, or to a greater degree than the cause of it will warrant;—whenever it leads on to violent words or actions;—and then, especially, is it sinful, when it takes lasting possession of the mind, and settles into a habit of malice or hatred.

And, first, anger is sinful, when it is excited against a being or person that is not the proper object of it. Of such sin are we guilty, when we are so destitute of religion and common sense, as to allow ourselves to

be angry with God, and with the dispensations of his providence. God is himself infinitely perfect; and all that he does is just and right. We cannot, therefore, be too much on our guard, against giving way to any disposition to murmur and repine—either in great things or in small—against what is ordered by his will. If we are *angry* with the station and circumstances in which Providence has placed us; or if, instead of being resigned under the calamities which fall on us, we complain as if we were hardly and injuriously dealt by, our anger is sinful. The same may be said, when we are fretful and impatient under the many little untoward accidents which frequently occur: when, for instance, we are out of humour with the weather, and murmur because the seasons are not such as our wishes would make them.

We offend too most decidedly against the precepts of the text, when we are angry with those who gently admonish us of our faults, and advise us to correct them. Brotherly admonition is really an instance of the truest kindness. If, instead of being thankful for it, and endeavouring to amend, we so far listen to an evil pride as to be *offended*, we act both foolishly and sinfully.

Another instance of anger, which is very foolish and blameable, is the anger which is excited against objects unendowed with rea-

son. Such is the anger which is sometimes felt against *very little* children; against dumb animals; and even against inanimate objects. Some persons are so *senseless*, as to allow themselves to be in a *passion* with the horse or cow which does not immediately do as they wish,—perhaps because it follows the mere impulse of its nature,—or with the tool which does not readily perform its office,—or with the block or stone, against which they have heedlessly hurt themselves. “He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly¹,” especially he who is angry on such occasions as these. Parents or nurses, who teach a child to beat the chair or table against which it has run, and to express its little resentment against every person or thing that happens to hurt or offend it, are thoughtlessly encouraging a habit of giving way to anger, which will make them a nuisance both to themselves and to others in this life, and perhaps ruin their souls in the life to come.

Again, anger is always unreasonable and sinful, when it is occasioned by comparative *trifles*. A heedless word, for instance, a casual look or mere inadvertence, will stir up a degree of anger in some men, at which those, whose passions are well regulated, are justly astonished. The angry man himself must feel, and often does feel, no little degree

¹ Prov. xiv. 17.

of shame, when in his cooler moments he considers, how trifling was the circumstance, which he weakly permitted to make his blood boil, and to throw his mind into a sort of tempest.

Even when it has some cause, yet anger, on whatever occasion, is sinful, when it is so violent as to get the better of our reason, and deprive us of the proper government of ourselves. It then becomes what the Scriptures appear to express by the term *wrath*, and what in common language is called *rage*. The *greatest provocation* will not justify this excessive and ungovernable passion. Such anger is too apt to lead on to violent words, and perhaps to violent actions, even to striking and wounds. Too many men, when in *a passion*, immediately give vent to it, in injurious reproachful language—perhaps in curses and imprecations, in calling down the vengeance, the *damnation* of God upon the person or thing which has offended them. Their angry language, probably, raises a similar storm of passion in the bosom of him who is the object of their wrath; one angry word produces another; and they go on, mutually rising in bitterness and wrath, till their passion knows no bounds. Let not such persons, when again cool, speak peace to their consciences, by saying that they are sorry for what they said and did, but that they were *in a passion*, and could not help it.

I say to them as I say to drunkards ; you are strictly answerable for all the sins of which you are guilty in that state, as well as for the great additional sin of throwing off the government of reason and religion. It is against such excesses that St. Paul cautions us a few verses after the text : “ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and *clamour*,” that is, loud and violent language, “ and *evil-speaking*,” calling reproachful, abusive names, “ be put away from you, with all *malice* ¹.” Certainly nothing can be more unworthy of a Christian, more unbecoming in one who professes to be a disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus, of him “ who, when “ he was reviled, reviled not again ; when he “ suffered, threatened not ².”

Sometimes, instead of expressing itself in violence of language and manner, anger takes the form of *sullenness* and *ill-humour*, which is displeased with every thing, even with kind offices, and attempts at reconciliation. It then becomes a most irksome inmate of the breast, painful and distressing both to him who is influenced by it, and to all who come within reach of his unhappy temper.

The last instance of sinful anger, which I shall now mention, is, when it settles into a spirit of *malice* and ill-will. It is against this, especially, that the apostle warns us in

¹ Eph. iv. 31.

² Peter ii. 23

the text, "Be ye angry and sin not,"—you may *possibly* have reasonable cause for a well-regulated anger—but, at all events, "let not the sun go down upon your wrath," never retire to rest in an unforgiving temper, or with a spirit of ill-will seated in your bosom. St. Paul adds, "neither give place to the devil." By yielding to a spirit of *malice*, you give an advantage to your great enemy, which he will perhaps improve to your utter ruin.

There is, I think, nothing against which our Saviour more earnestly cautions us, than against an unforgiving disposition. He enforces the necessity of forgiveness by precept, by striking parables, and, most powerfully, by his own example. He expressly assures us, that "if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us;" and his apostles, in a variety of passages, enforce the same doctrine. We can, hardly, therefore, be too much upon our guard against any thing approaching to malice, or a desire of revenge; and the danger that there always is, if we give way to anger, that it will lead us to a settled spirit of ill-will, should induce us to restrain it within the strictest bounds. Anger "resteth"—remains settled—"in the bosoms of fools," and of fools only.

In short, anger is evil and dangerous in so many ways, and upon so many accounts, that

if we reflect at all, we must feel the force of the representations against it in holy Scripture. We are told, that while, on the other hand, “he that is slow to wrath is of great understanding¹”; so, on the other, “he that is soon angry, dealeth foolishly; and he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly².”

III. Let us, therefore, my friends, do all that we can to get the better of this headstrong and turbulent passion. If any of us are by nature particularly inclined to it,—are of *a passionate disposition*,—that is a reason for taking the greater pains, and being the *more watchful*, and praying the *more earnestly*, in order to get the better of it;—but no excuse *at all* for giving way to it without resistance. Whatever sin most easily besets us, we should strive against that sin with especial care. If we are by nature inclined to wrath, there is the greatest reason why we should try to acquire—to put on—the spirit of meekness. Consider that a proneness to anger is generally a mark of a weak mind. We see it most in madmen, who are deprived of reason; in children, whose reason is not yet matured; and in those whose reason is weakened by infirmity or sickness. On the other hand, the getting the mastery of a tendency to anger is a proof of strength of mind, and of religious principle, aided by divine grace. The wise man tells us,

¹ Prov. xiv. 29.

² Prov. xiv. 17. 29.

that "he that is slow to anger is better than
"the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit
"than he that taketh a city¹."

Give me your attention while I suggest one or two hints, which may assist you in getting the better of anger. In the first place, endeavour to conquer pride. "Only by pride
"cometh contention²;" and pride is the chief source of anger. Men who are puffed up with a conceit of their own worth and importance, are apt to take offence at every trifling circumstance. They are *angry* if their persons and every thing belonging to them are not treated with the respect which they think their due. They are *angry* if their advice is not followed, if their opinion is neglected. If there was no such thing as pride in the world, there would hardly be any sinful anger. This, doubtless, is the reason why humility and meekness are so constantly united in the precepts of holy writ, in the passages, especially, which I have already referred to. In short, if we are humble, we shall not be *passionate*; and if we are in the habit of being soon and violently angry, we may be pretty sure that we have much evil pride at work within us.

Another important piece of advice is, to check the *first beginning of anger*. Endeavour to suppress the first emotions of it in your bosom; and, at all events, do not give vent or

¹ Prov. xvi. 32.

² Prov. xiii. 10.

expression to them, till you have taken time to consider whether you have just cause for resentment, whether you *do well to be angry*. “The beginning of strife,” and so also the beginning of anger, “is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with¹.” If we give utterance to angry words, the storm of passion will go on increasing till it knows no bounds. The like conduct we should observe when any one is angry with us; remembering, that “a soft answer turneth away wrath;” and “yielding pacifieth great offences;” “but grievous words stir up anger².” It will be wise too, as far as we can, to avoid being much in the company of men who are in the habit of giving way to violent anger, and who will be likely to lead us into the same fault. “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul³.”

We must also endeavour to moderate our attachment to the trifling and perishable things of this present world. If we are eager in the pursuit of the honours, the riches, or the pleasures of life, we shall be apt to be angry and out of humour when that pursuit is unsuccessful. If we set our hearts on worldly

¹ Prov. xvii. 14.

² Prov. xv. 1. and Eccl. x. 4.

³ Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

vanities and enjoyments, we shall be vexed and irritated when disappointed of them. The more we can succeed in setting our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth, the less shall we be exposed to be carried away by sinful anger.

Finally, let us earnestly beseech that Being, among the distinguishing fruits of whose influence are love and peace, that he would pour into our hearts a spirit of gentleness ; that he would enable us to check, to put away from us, all violent anger, and wrath, and clamour ; and to walk continually in all lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any.

THE PRAYER.

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, suppress in me that pride from whence cometh anger and contention ; grant me grace to put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and all malice. However I am tempted and provoked, make me still to possess my soul in *patience*, and not to be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Enable me to follow the example of meekness and forbearance given by thy Son, in whose name I beseech thee to hear my prayers.

SERMON XXII.

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES.

EPH. iv. 32.

“ Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

THERE are few instances in which the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ—in other words, the *old* and the *new man*—are more opposed to each other, than they are in the manner in which they severally behave under *injuries*, whether real or imaginary.

That we should feel, and in the first instance, resent, every wrong intentionally offered to us, appears indeed to have formed a part of the *original* constitution of our nature. This bare momentary resentment, therefore, considered in itself, is hardly to be looked upon as sinful. It becomes sinful, however, when it obtains fixed possession of the mind; when it drives from it that good will, which we are bound to feel towards all men, even towards those who least de-

serve it at our hands; still more, when it leads us to wish their hurt; and more, above all, when it prompts us to seek to harm them ourselves, and thus assume the character of the fierce and malignant passion of *revenge*. To this passion, however, hateful and pernicious as it is, we are all of us by the dictates of our *corrupted* nature, by the spirit of the *old man*, but too prone. When any wrong is offered us, the first impulse of that nature is to exclaim, I will be avenged on my enemy; "I will do so to him, as he hath done to me; "I will render to the man according to his "work¹." So prevalent indeed is this feeling, and so commanding the power which it too generally acquires, that it is often able to exalt itself, in the opinion of the unthinking, almost into a virtue. It is then looked upon as a mark of a high and manly spirit, and the disposition recommended in the text, the disposition to forgive injuries, and to maintain a readiness to do good offices to those who have been guilty of them, is not unfrequently reproached with meanness, and considered as the mark of a soul deficient in energy and resolution. There are men who can even boast of cherishing this feeling; who when they have suffered, or imagine that they have suffered, any wrong, declare their determination never to forgive it, never to rest till they

¹ Prov. xxiv. 29.

have repaid the injury, till they have gratified that revenge. They may perhaps pretend to acknowledge, that they know such conduct to be morally wrong; but make the acknowledgment in such manner, as if they were secretly proud of acting contrary to it, and as if they were satisfied that the strength of natural feeling was sufficient excuse or justification.

Such a disposition, however, and the conduct which naturally results from it, is totally at variance with the express injunctions, and with the whole spirit, of our holy Religion, utterly inconsistent with the Christian character. Both the Divine Author of that religion, and those to whom he entrusted the care of teaching and extending it among men, insist on nothing more earnestly and repeatedly, than on the duty of forgiving those who injure us, the duty of abstaining from every feeling and indulgence of revenge. “Ye have heard that it hath been said,” says our Saviour, near the very beginning of the public exercise of his ministry, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you¹.” His apostles in like manner exhort us not to ren-

¹ Matt. v. 43, 44.

der "evil for evil, or railing for railing¹;" to "recompense to no man evil for evil²;" "to conduct ourselves with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any³."

Nothing can be plainer than these injunctions; nothing more easy to understand. And it is equally plain, that the writers of the New Testament invariably represent a readiness to forgive, as the distinguishing mark of a real Christian, as indispensably required of those who wish to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called⁴. Consequently to allow ourselves to cherish any emotions of hatred, to indulge in any feelings of revenge against those who have injured us, is in some sort to renounce our claim to the name of Christian.

But perhaps we are ready to acknowledge the truth of this *in general*, to confess that *generally speaking*, revenge is unlawful;—but that in such and such instances we have been so grievously injured, that it is not only allowable, but even a duty. The precepts of our Lord and his apostles, however, admit not of such exceptions. They are *universal*, and extend to all imaginable cases; and in no instance whatever do they permit us to hate

¹ 1 Peter iii. 9.

² Col. iii. 12, 13.

³ Rom. xii. 17.

⁴ Eph. iv. 1.

any one; in no instance do they allow us to revenge ourselves, however great the wrong done unto us may be, or however it may be heightened by aggravating circumstances.

The right to revenge belongs not to any creature. "It is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord¹." To seek to avenge ourselves with our own hand, is invading the prerogative of Him, to whom alone "belongeth vengeance and recompense²."

Where the will of our heavenly Master is so clearly and decidedly made known to us, nothing more, certainly, ought to be necessary to induce us to comply with the exhortation in the text. The passion of revenge, however, is apt to take such strong hold on the mind, that any additional argument for such compliance can hardly be looked upon as superfluous. One or two such arguments I will now proceed to lay before you. Let me hope that they will not be without their weight; that they will not be found devoid of practical influence, where such influence is requisite.

And first; we ought to check every emotion of revenge from mere worldly prudence, and from considerations of our own comfort and interest in this world. There is, I know, a saying, that *revenge is sweet*. That at the

¹ Rom. xii. 19.

² Deut. xxxii. 35.

moment of its gratification it may produce a sensation of pleasure, of exultation, and triumph, I by no means deny; but without stopping to enlarge on the hateful—the *diabolical*—nature of such exultation, I must observe, (and I believe the experience of every one who has felt it will testify the truth of the observation,) that the pain and uneasiness it occasioned while it was rankling in the bosom, far more than counterbalanced the pleasure produced by its gratification.

But let us now consider what the consequences would be—what, sometimes, the consequences actually are—when those malignant feelings are indulged.

A man, we will suppose, has received, or thinks that he has received, some injury. The first emotion of his soul is a wish to retaliate, to repay the injury done unto him. Now, as every one is an unfair judge in his own case, and, where he is himself concerned, very apt to see things in a false light, which represents them as being very different from what they really are, it is probable, indeed almost certain, that the injury which he thinks he has received will appear much greater than it actually is. Perhaps the effect of mere ignorance, inadvertence, or mistake, will in his eyes be converted into an injury, though none was intended, or even thought of. This injury, whether real or

only imagined, he determines to revenge ; but, from the false estimate he has formed, his revenge will probably be *excessive* ; far beyond the wrong which occasioned it. He is now, instead of suffering, become the aggressor, and his enemy will in his turn seek to retaliate. And thus they will be in danger of going on, in an interchange of wrongs and mutual ill-offices, till a deadly spirit of hatred is formed, which the authority of human laws can hardly prevent from satisfying itself with blood, and which, where such laws do not exist, does, in fact, proceed to every evil word and work¹. “ The beginning of strife,” says the wise man, “ is as when one letteth out water².” And again, “ as coals are to burning coals and wood “ to fire ;” so are such contentious men to kindle strife³.

We should act wisely, if, instead of thus giving way to a sense of injury, we set ourselves quietly to consider what circumstances may be pleaded in mitigation of it. We should endeavour to make all fair allowances for the person who has offended us ; and consider, in the first place, whether he really intended it ; and if he did, whether it was not under some mistaken impression, whether, indeed, his conduct might not be attributed, even to some proper motive. We should re-

¹ See Bishop Butler’s sermon on this subject.

² Prov. xvii. 14.

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³ Prov. xxvi. 21.

flect how apt we are to be blinded by self-love in any case which affects ourselves, and how apt that principle is to magnify trifles. Let us reflect too, how often we ourselves fail in what is due to other men; how inattentive we are to their interests, how forgetful sometimes of the sort of respect which we ought to pay to them. We should think it hard if all our inadvertencies and mistakes should be construed into intentional offences, and resented as serious wrongs. Let us give to others the same indulgence which we expect ourselves, and the occasions of deep resentment, revenge, and quarrelling, will be greatly lessened.

Such forbearance is dictated not by religion only, but by common sense, and a regard for our own peace and comfort. If at the same time we cultivate a deep feeling of humility, and are penetrated with the conviction of our own unworthiness, with the sense that we have but little real claim to respect or attention, this conviction will cut off the principal occasions of offence, and, consequently, will leave us comparatively little room for the exercise of the virtue of *forgiveness* of injuries; and will render it easy in the cases in which it is called for.

As, however, neither the forbearance, nor the degree of humility which I have alluded to, are very common, I must call your attention to the powerful arguments for forgive-

ness which are proposed to us in the Scriptures.

One of the most forcible of these, is that which is furnished by the example of our Saviour, "Even as Christ forgave you," says St. Paul to the Colossians, "so also do ye¹." Christ, the Scriptures assure us, came into the world to purchase the pardon of our sins, by laying down his life for our sakes, by undergoing, in our stead, the punishment which our iniquities deserved. And this he did, while we were in a state of enmity with him. While we were yet sinners, and enemies to him through wicked works², "in due time "Christ died for the ungodly³." He gave too a striking and beautiful example of forgiveness, when at the time of his crucifixion he prayed for his murderers. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do⁴." Surely, the least return which we can offer for such unmerited mercy, is to endeavour to comply with his repeated exhortations to us to follow his example; and in this instance of meekness and forgiveness of injuries above all others, for in this he particularly proposed himself to our imitation.

Our blessed Lord, when enforcing the necessity of our forgiving those who have

¹ Col. iii. 13.

² Rom. v. 6.

³ Rom. v. and Col. i.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 34.

wronged us, dwells much upon the forgiveness held forth to us by God, and upon the disproportion which any injuries which can be offered to us by our fellow men, bear to our offences against him. Our sins against God are countless; “yea, they are more “in number than the hairs of our head¹.” They are attended too with the aggravation of being committed against One, who is higher than the highest, and excellent in power; against one to whom we are indebted for every blessing that we enjoy. And yet he continues to bear with us; he continues to be kind even “to the unthankful and to the “evil²,” and “sendeth rain on the just and on “the unjust³.” To forgive the offences committed against ourselves, therefore, is to follow the example, to imitate one of the most glorious perfections or attributes of God, the attribute of mercy; it is, to adopt the language of our Saviour, to become, in some sort, “the children of the Highest.” And, on the other hand, we are assured, that if we refuse to forgive those who have wronged us, neither can we hope for forgiveness of our offences at God’s hand. We might almost infer thus much from the natural suggestions of our own minds. Of ourselves, we must think it probable, that we shall be dealt with hereafter as we deal with others now. It is

¹ Psalm xl. 12.² Luke vi. 35.³ Matt. v. 45.

just and reasonable that it should be so. This natural feeling is strongly expressed by that sagacious observer of mankind, the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus. "He that
"revenge^t shall find vengeance from the
"Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in
"remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour the
"hurt that he hath done unto thee, so shall
"thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest.
"One man beareth hatred against another,
"and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He
"showeth no mercy to a man which is like
"himself; and doth he ask forgiveness of his
"own sins¹?"

We are assured by the highest authority, that this argument for the forgiveness of injuries is founded in truth. Our Lord himself repeatedly warns us, that if we forgive not, we shall not be forgiven by God. It was to illustrate this truth, and to bring it home to the consciences of his hearers, that he introduced the striking parable of the unforgiving servant², who, though he owed his lord ten thousand talents, yet refused to bear with his fellow-servant who owed him only an hundred pence. The consequences of his refusal you well know. He was delivered
"to the tormentors, till he should pay" to his lord "all that was due to him." You know also our Saviour's application of the

¹ Eccclus. xxviii. 1—4.

• ² Matt. xviii. 23—35.

parable; “ So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.” We must forgive *from our hearts*. It is not enough to abstain from ill-offices, and *outward* expressions of ill-will. If we still bear hatred in our *hearts*; if we *wish* harm to them, though we harm them not ourselves; if we rejoice when we hear of any harm happening to them, our forgiveness is not complete. This consideration is of so powerful a nature, that it ought always to be present with us, and that it might be thus present with us, our Lord has made it a part of our daily prayers, in which we beg God to forgive us our trespasses, only so far as we forgive them that trespass against us: —in other words, we tell him *not* to forgive us, if we ourselves are unforgiving. Reflect for a moment upon the dreadful consequences of having our sins unforgiven by God: and surely nothing more can be necessary to induce you to comply with the exhortation of the text. Upon the first rising of any emotion of malice or revenge, recollect that if you give way to those dark feelings, you give way to them at your peril. You may indeed, by gratifying them, hurt your enemy, but the evil which you inflict upon yourself is, beyond all comparison, greater than any you can do to him; for you will thus deprive yourself of the forgiveness of God, and will

bring the dreadful penalty of your sins down upon your head.

Let us then, my friends, continually strive, and watch, and pray, against every approach to an unforgiving disposition, against every desire for, or attempt at, revenge. Let us not keep the remembrance of either real or fancied wrongs rankling in our bosoms, under the pretence that *we can forgive, but not forget*. It may be true, that we cannot always literally forget; but let us take heed that this be not made a cloak to cover a secret feeling of ill-will, or lurking enmity of heart. The wrongs that are done unto us cannot greatly hurt us, if we will not let them. To pass them over is a mark of real greatness and manliness of soul; it is the glory of a man "to pass over a transgression¹." And, what is of more consequence, forgiveness is a necessary part of the character of a real Christian, of him who has put on the new man.

Let us therefore earnestly beseech the Spirit of grace, to pour into our hearts his distinguishing fruits of love, peace, long-suffering, and gentleness². Let us beseech him, to enable us to "put on, as the elect of God,—meekness" and "long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against

¹ Prov. xix. 11.

² Gal. v. 22.

“ any ¹ ;” “ to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, *forgiving one another*, even as God, “ for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven” us ².

THE PRAYER.

(From the Whole Duty of Man.)

O blessed Jesu, who wast led as a sheep to the slaughter, let, I beseech thee, that admirable example of *meekness* quench in me all sparks of *anger* and *revenge*, and work in me such a gentleness and calmness of spirit, as no provocations may ever be able to disturb. Lord, grant I may be so far from offering the least injury, that I may never return the greatest any otherwise than with prayers and kindness ; that I, who have so many *talents* to be forgiven by thee, may never exact *pence* of my brethren ; but that, putting on mercy, meekness, and long-suffering, thy peace may rule in my heart, and make it an acceptable habitation to thee, who art the Prince of peace ; to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory for ever.

¹ Col. iii. 12. 15.

² Eph. iv. 32.

SERMON XXIII.

ENVY.

1 COR. xiii. 4.

Charity envieth not.

ALL the passions *originally* implanted in human nature are innocent in themselves ; and when directed to their proper objects, and kept within due bounds, become instruments of good to man, and of glory to God. This is the case with hope and fear, with love and hatred, with joy and sorrow, and with anger. *Envy*, however, appears to be altogether evil, to be made up of malignity and baseness ; and as such could never have existed in a state of innocence.

Envy is a secret displeasure of mind, at seeing another person possess some advantage, which we ourselves have not, or, at least, have not in the same degree. It inclines those who are under its influence, to wish that the prosperity which has excited

it, may be in some way lessened; and too often shows itself in attempts to lower the character, or in some way to injure the prospects of those, whose success has given birth to it.

In this there is something so base, something so unworthy not only of a Christian, but of a *man*, that hardly any one will acknowledge, even to himself, that he is actuated by so hateful a passion. I fear, however, that it prevails too generally. There are but too many persons, who cannot see another getting on in the world, especially if he was originally of the same rank and in the same circumstances with themselves, without feeling some sort of vexation. When any good fortune unexpectedly happens to a man, there are always some persons disposed to *grudge* it to him, and inclined to find out some reason why he ought not to have met with it. We often witness among the poorer classes of society a most amiable and praiseworthy readiness to assist each other in distress; in the time of sickness or other calamity, they will perform the kindest offices without any expectation of reward in this world. But often these same persons cannot see or hear of a gift, or other instance of kindness, bestowed upon a neighbour, especially upon one whom they choose to think less deserving than themselves, without feeling angry, both with him who gives and him

who receives the benefit; and at the same time inclined to run them both down. To him who confers the kindness, they impute some unbecoming motive; or, at all events, a blameable weakness, and a want of fairness or discernment in not doing the same by them; and him who receives it they charge with some meanness or unworthy compliance. How many too are the persons, who, being placed by Providence in that state of life, which depends on daily labour for daily bread, look with an evil eye on all that are exempted from the necessity of bodily work; and not only murmur against God because others have, as they think, so much, while they have so little, but *envy* them their affluence, and secretly rejoice when they meet with losses, or when any calamitous want brings them down to a level with themselves. From the same bad principle proceeds much of the disaffection to established government, and of murmuring and repining against “the powers that be¹.”

The working of this evil passion shows itself in our earliest years. Infants unable to speak, cannot bear to see any trifle given to another if they are passed over; and little societies of children, brought together either for instruction or for amusement, feel something of *envy*, if any one of their number is

¹ Rom. xiii. 1.

distinguished by peculiar marks of kindness, and are perhaps disposed to run him down as a favourite. Even among brothers and sisters, who ought to be so dear to each other, an indulgence granted to one is often sufficient to occasion dissatisfaction to the rest; who instead of taking pleasure, as they ought to do, in a brother's good, feel displeased and angry both with him, and with the parent or friend by whom the indulgence has been given.

We are ashamed to acknowledge even to ourselves, that we are influenced by any feeling so base as *envy*, but are we entirely free from it? Let us suppose a man, whom we thought inferior to ourselves, or, at least, upon the same level, and in the same situation, becoming decidedly superior to us in some qualification, upon which we prided ourselves, or in some outward advantage;—in riches, for instance, in the good-will and favour of man, in honour and reputation;—are we able sincerely to rejoice in his success? do we feel no secret desire to see him checked in his career of prosperity, and descending again to the same level with ourselves? When we hear another commended for some quality, in which we imagine ourselves to excel, or for the display of some talent, or the performance of some praiseworthy action, do we never feel any inward workings of pride, which make us feel as if

the praise bestowed upon him was a sort of blame to ourselves? which make us, in short, *envy* him the approbation he receives? Do we feel no lurking wish to throw in something to his disparagement, something to lessen the commendation given? We naturally should blush to confess this; but let us consider honestly, whether any thing like this is the case with us or not. The mere existence of such a feeling in the bosom is evidently mean and sinful;—but if it shows itself in word or action, it increases in guilt.

Perhaps what has been said may have been sufficient to convince you, that envy, in a greater or less degree, is a vice by no means uncommon. Let us now consider more particularly, how great and sore an evil it is.

And, in the first place, it is clearly and directly contrary to *charity*,—charity, that distinguished grace, without which all other seemingly good qualities are absolutely worthless: *charity envieth not*. Instead of envying, the Christian love of our neighbour takes pleasure in whatever good happens to him, as if it happens to ourselves. It rejoices, and rejoices sincerely, with those that do rejoice¹; is glad to see them prosperous, and getting on in the world, even though it is

¹ Rom. xii. 15.

itself left behind in a lower and less advantageous station.

Being thus contrary to love, *envy* is to be looked upon as one of the worst marks of the corruption of our nature. It is represented as such by the apostles. Thus St. Paul speaks of the unconverted heathen as “full of *envy* and murder¹,” as “living in malice and *envy*, hateful; and hating one another².” He exhorts the Roman Christians, to “walk honestly, not in strife and *envying*³ ;” and warns the Corinthians⁴, and the Galatians, that so far as there was among them *envying* and strife, so far were they to consider themselves as in an unrenewed, an unchristian state. St. Peter affectionately exhorts us to lay aside “all malice, guile, and *envies*⁵ ;” and St. James tells us, that if we “have bitter *envying* and strife” in our hearts⁶, we can hardly pretend to be Christians, without lying against the truth ; “for,” continues he, “where *envying* and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work⁷.”

Every evil work, according to St. James, may proceed from *envy* ; and the evil of *envy* will appear in a still stronger light, if we go on to consider some of the sad effects which

¹ Rom. i. 29.

² Titus iii. 3.

³ Rom. xiii. 13.

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 3.

⁵ 1 Pet. ii. 1.

⁶ James iii. 14.

⁷ James iii. 16.

proceed from it. When *envy* is not restrained either by religion, or by humane feelings, or by shame, it produces the most melancholy consequences. It leads those who are under its influence, to do what they can to blacken the characters of those whom they envy, and to lower them in public estimation. Sometimes it proceeds even farther than this, and incites them to deeds expressive of their malevolent and envious feelings. It seems to be with a reference to its tendency to work on in the *dark*, in order to accomplish the depression, or even the destruction, of him, by whose seeming prosperity it has been excited, that the wise man says, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is “outrageous; but who is able to stand before “envy¹?”

I will not pretend to enumerate, or to describe, all the evil consequences produced by *envy*, but will confine myself to those which are particularly mentioned in Scripture.

The first crime, the first calamitous event, recorded in Scripture after the fall of man, is the murder of Abel by the hand of Cain;—the death of a brother, by a brother's hand. “And wherefore slew he him? because his “own works were evil, and his brother's “righteous².” Few parts of the Bible are more familiar to us, and more interesting, than the story of Joseph; and much of this

¹ Prov. xxvii. 4.

² 1 John iii. 12.

story hinges upon his being sold by his brethren into Egypt. But what was it that induced them to take this step, to do this deed of cruelty and unkindness so unnatural? It was *envy*. "The patriarchs," says St. Stephen, "moved with *envy*, sold Joseph "into Egypt¹." They envied him the favour which his father showed to him, and his coat of many colours; they envied him also on account of his dreams, his supernatural revelations from on high, and the high rank which those revelations foreboded. *Envy* took possession of their souls, and entirely overpowered the natural affection which they ought to have felt towards a brother; and kept them from reflecting, that by their cruelty towards him, they were not unlikely to bring down their father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Indeed, the first introduction of sin and misery among men is ascribed in the Book of Wisdom to the *envy* of the evil spirit. "Through envy of the "devil came death into the world²." The devil *envied* man the happiness which he enjoyed in Paradise, from the favour of his Maker, and his envy led him to endeavour to destroy that happiness by tempting man to sin.

When our blessed Lord came into the world, to repair the mischief occasioned by

¹ Acts vii. 9.

² Wisdom ii. 24.

the author of evil, he was interrupted in his blessed work, and persecuted by the Jewish rulers. And what was it that induced them to adopt this line of conduct? *Envy.* They envied him his holy life, and his influence with the people; and when, in order to accomplish his destruction, they brought him before Pilate, Pilate himself is said to have known, that it was through *envy* that they delivered him to him¹. So again, when, after his death, his chosen followers began to preach the glad tidings of salvation, the same malevolent feelings obstructed them in their work. In the fifth chapter of the Acts, the high priest, and they that were with him, were "filled with indignation²;" or, as it is in the margin, "with *envy*," at the influence which the apostles acquired by their miraculous cures, and successful preaching. Again, in the thirteenth chapter we read, that the Jews, which believed not, "were filled with envy³," and by their envy were induced to speak "against those " things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting, and blaspheming." And on a like occasion, in the seventeenth chapter⁴, *envy* appears to have carried them on to deeds of actual violence.

From that time to this, similar effects have

¹ Matt. xxvii. 18. Mark xv. 10. ² Acts v. 17.

³ Acts xiii. 45. ⁴ Acts xvii. 5. *

been constantly produced by this evil and hateful passion.

And now, my friends, can it be necessary that I should produce any additional motives for persuading you to be very much on your guard against *envy*, and very earnest in your endeavours and prayers to suppress it? If additional motives *are* necessary, I might mention the uneasiness, the pain, which this passion occasions to the person himself, who is influenced by it. He who gives way to it, is, *indeed*, his own enemy. Instead of deriving pleasure, as he ought, and as he might, from all the good which he sees around him, it becomes to him the source of bitterness and vexation of spirit; and his only delight is in the losses and calamities of those to whom he ought to wish well. Like an evil spirit, he rejoices in evil for evil's sake. How painful and corroding envy is, when it takes possession of the soul, may none of us ever know by sad experience. "Envy," says the Scripture, "is the rottenness of the bones¹." Of all the sore maladies to which suffering human nature is exposed, one of the most dreadful is the *rottenness of the bones*; that disease which seizes on the bones, the stay and support of the body, consumes them in secret, and from them extends to the rest of

¹ Prov. xiv. 30.

the system. To this sad malady is *envy* compared. It gnaws the inmost heart, and makes the soul pine and waste away in silent anguish. It is on this account that envy was styled by one of the fathers of the Church the most unjust, and at the same time the most just, of all the passions; the most *unjust*, on account of its contrariety to all that is good and reasonable, and the mischief which it does to others; the most *just*, because it is sure itself to inflict just and severe punishment on him that is guilty of it.

And after making a man miserable in this life, envy, if unsubdued and allowed to keep possession of the heart, will exclude him from heaven in the world to come. Envy is expressly mentioned as one of those works which have this sad effect; and we may be sure so malevolent a feeling can find no place in the regions of love, and peace, and joy.

I am confident, my friends, that we must all most sincerely wish to keep ourselves free from this base and wretched passion, which is thus destructive of happiness, both in this world and the next. In order to be preserved from it, we must watch and pray—*watch* with much care, and *pray* with great earnestness—that we may be delivered from this temptation. In addition to the arguments against it, which I have mentioned, let us consider how absurd and unreasonable

it is in itself. For what can be *more unreasonable*, than to feel as if you were worse off than you were before, because another is better off? to be angry, and out of humour with any man, because he happens to meet with some good fortune; or, to speak more properly, because he receives some advantage from the goodness of Providence? As partakers of one common nature, and one common redemption, we are all members of one body, and whatever good happens to any part, happens, in fact, to the whole; so that if one member is well off, all the other members should naturally rejoice with it ¹.

Endeavour to feel in this manner yourselves, and to impress these sentiments on your children. Accustom them to see a brother, or sister, or a playfellow, occasionally partakers of indulgences, from which they are debarred themselves, without being vexed at it. Teach them, that instead of being displeased and *envious*, they ought to be glad at whatever good they see, even if they have no part in it; and that their enjoyments are not less than they were before, because others seem to have greater.

You must be sensible that nothing would more tend to check and prevent envy, than cultivating a spirit of real good will towards

¹ Cor. xii. 26.

men in general. If we love our neighbour as ourselves, we shall, as I hinted near the commencement of this discourse, be as glad when any good happens to him as when it happens to ourselves. *Charity envieth not.*

In order too to check envy, we must nourish in our bosoms a genuine feeling of *humility*. Almost all the evil passions have their birth, or their growth and increase, from *pride*; and envy in particular gathers strength, if it does not in the first instance arise from a conceit of our own worth, from the presumptuous idea that he whom we envy is less deserving than ourselves. If we have a low opinion of our own worth in the sight both of God and man, we shall not be uneasy at being in a low station, or in meeting with but few advantages.

We should do well too to fix our attention upon the blessings which we have actually received, and to feel thankful for them in our hearts, instead of envying those conferred on others, and being angry both with them, and with him by whom they were bestowed.

If we could acquire the habit of looking upon all temporal advantages as comparative trifles, of really setting our hearts and "affections on things above, not on things on the earth," we should be in little danger from envy. Things that have little weight

or value in our esteem, would never be capable of exciting in our hearts this restless and uneasy passion.

If, at any time, you should unhappily feel any emotions of envy springing up in your bosom, at all events, be careful not to give vent to them by any unkind words or actions; least of all, by saying any thing to the disadvantage of him, by whose success they have been excited. Let us rather be anxious, in an unconstrained manner, to show him all tokens of kindness. The giving utterance to envy will be apt to increase and strengthen it, while it will naturally be lessened by kindness of behaviour.

Above all, let us pray fervently to God, that he would restrain and check within us all the evil workings of *envy*. Let us implore him that he would remove from us “all strife and envying,” as well as “bitterness, wrath, and malice;” and that he would shed abroad in our hearts still larger and larger measures of that Spirit, whose distinguishing fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and goodness.

THE PRAYER.

(From the Whole Duty of Man.)

Lord, grant that I may never look with murmuring on my own condition, nor with *envy* on that of

other men. Give me such a contempt of mere earthly riches, that whether they increase or decrease, I may never set my heart upon them, but that all my care may be to be rich towards God, and to lay up my treasure in heaven: that I may so set my affections on things above, that when Christ, who is my life, shall appear, I may also appear with him in glory. Grant this, O Lord, for the merits of the same Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXIV.

RASH JUDGING AND CENSORIOUSNESS.

MATT. vii. 1.

“ Judge not, that ye be not judged.”

THERE are few of us probably who, at some period of our lives, have not suffered from *censoriousness*; and perhaps still fewer who have not been guilty of it themselves. The disposition to find fault, to form an unfavourable opinion upon the conduct and characters of other men, and to judge hastily and hardly of their principles and motives, is, in all classes of society, but too prevalent. It is, however, directly contrary to the kind and charitable spirit of our religion, as well as to the express injunction of our Lord and his apostles. “ Judge not, that ye be not judged,” is a maxim we should never forget, and which should have a constant influence upon our conduct.

In discoursing on this precept, I mean,

First, to mention a few of the cases to which it cannot be considered as applying :

Secondly, to point out some of the instances of rash and uncharitable* judging which are most frequent : and,

Thirdly, to add a few words upon the sinfulness and danger of giving way to this habit.

I. And, first, this precept does not apply to men invested with authority in church or state, who are required by their office to pass judgment upon persons and things, to the best of their ability. Even if the opinions which they form should turn out to be unfounded, yet if formed honestly, and to the best of their ability, they are not to be considered as offending against the injunction in the text.

Neither, in the next place, does this precept require us to think equally well of all men, or to be ready to confide in all alike. It is doubtless allowable to be willing to trust some men rather than others, and to be wary and on our guard where we have any reason for suspicion. Such caution does not necessarily imply that we judge *ill* of them, but merely that we have not sufficient grounds for judging *well*. And if we are careful not to suffer such suspicion to weigh more with us than it ought, and do not communicate it to others, except in the way of charitable caution and advice, such conduct

cannot be considered as forbidden by the text.

Thus again, we are not obliged by this prohibition to resist the evidence of our senses, and to shut our eyes to open and notorious transgressions. If we see a man drunk, we cannot avoid judging him to be guilty of drunkenness; and if we hear him swear, we must judge him guilty of profaneness, and of breaking the express commandment of God. Still less does this precept require us to excuse men who are openly guilty, to justify their crimes, or to represent them as trifling or harmless. Christian charity, and the recollection of our own weakness, may induce us to make what excuse, what allowances we can for the *sinner*, but we must be careful how we venture to lessen the *sin*. There are men, indeed, who, partly from a mistaken liberality, and partly to extenuate their own evil deeds, are in the habit of making light of the most serious offences. Such conduct, instead of being kind and charitable, is in reality cruel and destructive; for it encourages men in practices which may occasion the ruin of their souls. At the same time it tends to confound the distinction between right and wrong, it tends to sacrifice the interests of virtue and the holiness and truth of God, to the weakness and corruption of man; and is consequently in danger of the woe denounced against those, "who

“call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.”

II. In order to obviate mistake and misapprehension, I have thought it right to say thus much, as to what is *not* forbidden by the precept in the text. We will proceed in the second place to consider what *is* forbidden by it, what our Lord intended when he said, “Judge not, that ye not judged.”

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to remark, that by *judging*, in this passage is meant judging *unfavourably* or *condemning* the motives or conduct of other men. If, without sufficient grounds, we form such harsh opinions in our own minds, we are guilty of a violation of charity; and are still more blamable if we suffer such opinion of the *head* to influence the *heart*, if *ill-will* is the consequence of our unfavourable judgment. This, I say, is the case, even if the harsh judgment is confined to our own bosoms. But it seldom will be confined to them; “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh;” and we are all too ready to give utterance to the judgments we have passed within ourselves, either that we may take credit for our sagacity and acuteness, or from the mere love of talking. When we thus express our uncharitable opinion, we are guilty of the sin which is termed *censoriousness*;

and our guilt is greater, in proportion as the mischief is more widely spread. Indeed, it is impossible to say how far the evil may extend. The harsh judgment which we have formed, will seldom be softened by those to whom it is communicated. Often, as it spreads, it will become more unfavourable to the injured person; and what was first given only as a strong opinion, will, by others, be considered as a certain truth. The character which we have censured may thus be utterly ruined, and the mischief which we do become irreparable.

This is one of the usual consequences of offending against the precept in the text. We *do* offend against it, whenever we unnecessarily form a decided opinion to the disadvantage of another, without very sufficient grounds for it. And if we take into our consideration how very seldom it is that we have such certain and sufficient grounds, how very rarely we are fully acquainted with all the circumstances of any case, and how utterly unable to penetrate the many and various reasons and motives from which any action or line of conduct proceeded, we shall find that our safest and wisest course is to abstain, where we can, from judging at all.

It may be useful, perhaps, to point out some of the instances of *rash judging*, which are most frequent.

We are guilty then of this offence, when-

ever we condemn any one merely from *hearsay* and *common report*. No one is ignorant how hastily, and lightly, unfavourable reports are often taken up, how eagerly they are propagated by the thoughtless and unfeeling, and how apt they are to be exaggerated, almost by every one through whom they pass. No one is ignorant how often, when they are sifted to the bottom, they are found either to be totally without foundation, or to have arisen from circumstances which ought to have furnished matter of praise rather than of censure. Mere report, therefore, can never be looked upon as a sufficient foundation on which to form a judgment to a neighbour's disadvantage. Before we can safely form, still more before we can *express*, such an opinion, we ought to go through a process something like that which, in a particular instance of judging, was prescribed to the Jews. If "it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold it be true, and the thing certain¹." That you have been merely *told* a thing, is, generally speaking, no sufficient reason for passing a harsh judgment, unless you have also inquired diligently, and found it to be true.

Thus we offend against the precept in the text when we condemn any man, merely

¹ Deut. xvii. 4.

upon hearing what is said against him, without knowing what he has to urge in his own defence. This maxim of common prudence and justice, we might learn even from the heathen Festus. "It is not the manner of the Romans," says he, "to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him¹." If we venture to judge *at all*, at least let us not be less circumspect, less considerate in our judgment, than this unenlightened heathen. *Appearances*, perhaps, as well as common report, may be against a man, but mere appearances do not form sufficient ground to go upon. "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment²."

Another very common instance of *rash judging* is, when the words or actions of our neighbour being capable of being viewed either in a bad or in a good light, we put the worst interpretation upon them; thus perhaps, condemning him for a fault of which neither God nor his own conscience in any degree accuse him. The disposition to this, frequent as it is, is a mark of the sinful pride and corruption of our nature, and is directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity. Charity "thinketh no evil." Charity "believeth

¹ Acts xxv. 16.² John vii. 24.

“all things; hopeth all things¹,” and he who has that most excellent gift of charity shed abroad in his heart, will be ready to put upon any doubtful action the best construction of which it is susceptible; will be glad to believe it to have proceeded from a good intention, unless the contrary be evident and undeniable.

Sometimes, from a single action we assume the right to condemn at once a man's whole character and conduct. From a single act of drunkenness, for instance, or a single act of dishonesty, we perhaps pronounce him who has been guilty of it to be an habitual drunkard, or habitually dishonest. Such a single act of sin, no doubt, constitutes a man a sinner in the sight of God; and, if unrepented of, exposes him to the severity of his wrath; but still it does not form sufficient foundation for any one of his fellow-mortals to pass a censure upon his whole character, as if it took its colour from that one act. Those who, humanly speaking, are good men, may, through the suddenness or the violence of temptation, fall into sin; and their sin is the more grievous, since it gives occasion to the enemies of the Lord and of goodness to blaspheme. But if, from one sin, we immediately conclude, that all their previous good conduct was mere pretence, and that they

are in reality destitute of religion, our judgment is rash and uncharitable.

An instance of *rash judging*, which is by no means unfrequent, is, when we form a *general* unfavourable opinion of a man, merely because either we or our friends have received some injury from him, or have had with him some misunderstanding. The soreness which we feel in consequence, disposes us too often, to see his whole conduct in an unfavourable point of view. But surely, the circumstance of his having wronged, or had some difference with, either ourselves, or our friends, does not affect all the rest of his character; and if we permit such a circumstance to lower his character in the judgment which we form in our own bosoms—still more if we express that opinion to others—we are guilty of a weak selfishness. He who takes upon him the office of a judge or censor, must, at least, divest himself of all prejudice and partiality.

Nearly the same may be said, when we judge hardly of a man, because he belongs to a party of which we disapprove. We may have reason to think, that in that instance he is mistaken and wrong; but if on that account we assume a right to find fault with his general character, and to represent it altogether in an unfavourable point of view, we offend decidedly against the injunction in the text. And so, on the other hand, if we

lay to the charge of any particular class or body of men, the faults of some few of the individuals of which it consists; if, for instance, we tax a whole trade or profession with dishonesty, because we have suffered from the dishonesty of one or two of its members; if we charge a whole sect in religion with hypocrisy, or a whole party in the state with want of public principle, because we think that in some particular instances we have ground for such a charge, we are guilty of a very blameable kind of *rash judging*.

Some unthinking and ignorant people are in the habit of forming their opinion of men, from the outward circumstances in which they are placed; and if they see them visited by losses or other calamities, consider such calamities as divine judgments upon them, conclude that they must have been grievous sinners, and set themselves to find out, or perhaps to *invent*, the particular sins for which such judgments are inflicted by God. We can hardly be too much on our guard against this instance of uncharitableness. Such judgment is always *rash*. Of this fault those men appear to have been guilty, who told our Lord “of the Galileans, whose blood
“ Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.
“ And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners
“ above all the Galileans, because they suf-

“fered such things? I tell you, Nay: but
 “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise pe-
 “rish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the
 “tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think
 “ye that they were sinners abqve all men
 “that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you,
 “Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all
 “likewise perish¹.” We should always re-
 member, that, as outward prosperity, though
 it calls for the gratitude of those who enjoy
 it, is no proof of God’s peculiar favour, so
 afflictions and sufferings are by no means to
 be regarded as tokens of his displeasure.
 They are rather to be looked upon as proofs
 of his fatherly care, and must never be made
 the ground or occasion of any unfavourable
 opinion of him who is visited with them.

To pretend to judge even of the thoughts
 and intentions of men, and of the *motives*
 from which their actions **proceed**, is almost
 always rash, and, **consequently**, strictly for-
 bidden in the text. It **belongs** to him alone,
 who is the great Searcher of hearts, to judge
 of these. He often knows, that actions of
 very questionable appearance proceed from
 pure and upright motives; and that others of
 the fairest outside are deficient in principle.
He knows this; but it must almost always
 remain unknown to man, till that day when
 the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed.

¹ Luke xiii. 1—5.

“ Therefore,” says the apostle, “ judge nothing
“ before the time, until the Lord come, who
“ both will bring to light the hidden things of
“ darkness, and will make manifest the coun-
“ sels of the hearts¹.”

In short, the prohibition in the text forbids all disposition to condemn or censure the actions or motives of other men, unless when we are called upon to do so by a sense of duty. It forbids all proneness to take pleasure in finding fault ; all inquisitiveness into the lives and conduct of others, for the purpose of finding materials for blaming them. And when, as it sometimes happens, we are compelled in our own minds to pronounce them guilty, it forbids us needlessly to disclose their guilt, to delight in speaking of it, or to find our amusement in blackening or lowering their characters. *Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity.*

III. There can, I think, be but little necessity for stating, at any length, the reasons on which this prohibition is founded, or for pointing out the sinfulness and danger of *rash judging*. A few words, however, upon this head, may assist what has been said in making the deeper and more lasting impression.

And, first, let us direct our attention to the evil source, from which this disposition

to judge and censure others, appears to proceed. It springs from the pride and naughtiness of our hearts ; it springs from the vain imagination, that by thus judging, we give proof of our superior sagacity and discernments ; and from the idea, that by lowering the character of those around us, we raise our own, and make it appear the brighter. We receive an empty satisfaction from thus exalting ourselves above them ; from the sort of superiority which is implied in becoming their censor and their judge.

And as a censorious disposition shows great want of humility, so it is a mark of ignorance of our own character, of an alarming insensibility to our own failings, infirmities, and sins. Did we in any degree see our sins in the light in which we *ought* to see them, and in which, if our eyes were not blinded by partiality and self-conceit, we *should* see them, our attention would be so occupied in lamenting and endeavouring to correct our own faults, that we should have little leisure and less inclination to attend to those of other men ; of whom, generally speaking, we know much less evil than we know of ourselves. We should then feel the force of that passage of St. Paul, “ wherein thou “ judgest another, thou condemnest thy- “ self¹.” We should feel the force of our

¹ Rom. ii. 1.

Lord's address to the accusers of the woman taken in adultery, "He that is without sin
"among you, let him first cast a stone at
"her¹;" or that of his indignant expostulation which follows the verse which I have chosen for my text, "Why beholdest thou the
"mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is thine own eye?
"Or, how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let
"me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and,
"behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou
"hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of
"thine own eye; and then shalt thou see
"clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye²."

If we loved our neighbour as ourselves, as we ought to love him, we should feel as little satisfaction in contemplating his failings, as in dwelling upon our own. Are we willing that other men should judge, and blame, and condemn us? If we are not, we should call to mind the golden rule, of doing as we would be done by, and let that restrain our disposition to censoriousness.

The *judging* forbidden in the text is an instance, not only of want of humility and of charity, but of want of justice. When we are guilty of it, we assume an authority over our neighbour to which we have *no right*. He is our equal and our *brother*; we are sub-

¹ John viii. 7.

² Matt. vii. 3—5.

ject to the same Master, and must equally submit to the same judgment hereafter. And thus, to judge and condemn him we have no more right or title than a culprit before a court of human judicature has to judge and condemn those who are about to be tried in the same manner as himself. "Why dost thou judge thy brother?" says the apostle, "or, why dost thou set at nought thy brother?" "for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us not, therefore," continues St. Paul, "judge one another any more¹."

And as rash judging is an act of injustice towards men, so is it also to be looked upon as an act of injustice towards God. It is an usurpation of his right; an invasion of his prerogative. He is the God of judgment; to him alone judgment and vengeance belong. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth²;" and you have no right to censure him.

And if the sinfulness of rash uncharitable judging be so great, the punishment which awaits it will doubtless be severe. It is to this that our attention is directed by the latter part of the text; "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what

¹ Rom. xiv. 10. 13.

² Rom. xiv. 4.

“measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” These words may be applied to the consequences of sinful judging even in this world. With what judgment we judge, we may expect to be judged *even here*. If we have allowed ourselves to be harsh and censorious and uncharitable in judging others, they, in their turn, will assume, and feel that they may justly assume, a right to treat us in the same manner. They will feel that they have a right to watch our conduct with an observant eye, to publish abroad whatever faults they can discover in it, and to hold them up to the reproach of a censorious world. In their most awful meaning, however, these words refer to the judgment of the last day,—that day when we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. At that dreadful day, as, on the one hand a meek, and gentle, and charitable disposition will, through the merits of Christ, be graciously accepted; so will that which has delighted in uncharitable judging, be treated with terrible severity; for with what judgment we judge, we shall be judged, and, “he shall have judgment without mercy, “that hath showed no mercy¹.” This consideration of the last judgment, joined with the contemplation of our own weaknesses and sins, and of the need in which we stand

¹ James ii. 13.

362 *Rash Judging and Censoriousness.*

of mercy, the consideration of *the beam in our own eye*, ought certainly to repress effectually a disposition to uncharitable judging.

Let us, my friends, beseech God to pardon our past transgressions of this precept, and for the time to come, to assist us in striving against this dangerous, but too prevalent, fault. Let us check both in ourselves and in others all censoriousness, eagerness to blame and condemn; and let us, on the contrary, be ready to make all fair allowances for other persons, to be candid and kind in the interpretation which we put upon their conduct. Let us abstain from judging *at all*, unless when called to it by a sense of duty, and strong conviction. Let us,—to adopt the words of the apostle which I before quoted,—“judge nothing before the time, “until the Lord come, who both will bring “to light the hidden things of darkness, and “will make manifest the counsels of the “heart.”

THE PRAYER.

O Lord, the God of judgment, by whom alone our actions and words and thoughts are justly weighed, keep far from us all disposition to judge and censure our brethren. We stand ourselves in constant need of thy mercy and forgiveness. Let us not deprive ourselves of the hope of it, by uncharitable judging; but in our conduct to each other, let mercy still rejoice against judgment, as we pray that it may do in our own cases, through the merits and atonement of Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXV.

EVIL-SPEAKING.

Speak not evil one of another; brethren.

As the greater part of the comforts and enjoyments of society proceeds from the proper use of *speech*, so a very large portion of the discomforts of society springs from its abuse. It is with a view to the evils which arise from the abuse of this faculty, that St. James calls the “tongue a world of iniquity;—an “unruly evil, full of deadly poison¹.” Of the many sins of the tongue, *slander* and *evil-speaking* are two of the most frequent, and at the same time two of the most dangerous. The distinction between slander and evil-speaking appears to be this: *Slander*, which is also called *calumny*, consists in inventing ourselves, or propagating from

¹ James iii. 6. 8.

others, any report against our neighbour's character, which is *not true*. *Evil-speaking* or *back-biting*, extends to saying any thing to his prejudice even when what we say is *true*; unless we are called upon to speak, by some weighty consideration of justice or charity.

From this statement you perceive, that *slander* consists of *two* sins—of the sin of evil-speaking and that of lying united together. And when you consider, that lying of itself is a dreadful sin; that it proceeds from the devil, who is the father of lies; that “lying lips are abomination to the Lord;” and that, “all liars will have their part in the lake of fire, which is the second death;” you must be sensible how exceeding sinful, and consequently how dangerous, it becomes, when united with a sin, which implies such cruelty and injustice to our neighbour as the sin of evil-speaking.

Of wilful and deliberate *slander*, however, of the sin of saying any thing against a neighbour's character, which you know to be false, I would hope that none of you would be guilty. No one *can* deliberately be guilty of it, until he has thrown off the fear of God, until he has brought himself to forget or despise his baptismal engagements, and virtually to renounce all the sanctions and obligations of religion.

But though I would in charity hope that

none of you could be guilty of deliberate slander; I cannot, I fear, say the same of the sin of *evil-speaking*, the sin of 'injuring' our neighbour's character, of speaking evil of him behind his back, when we think that what we say is founded in truth. This is a sin which is every where most deplorably prevalent; and a sin, which is the disgrace, and which occasions the disquiet, of every town and village in the kingdom; and from which few of us, it is to be feared, are entirely free. Many, even of those who profess, and to a degree really feel, a reverence for God and his laws, and are carefully observant of many of the duties of religion, are yet too apt to be guilty in this instance. The tongue, according to the expression of the apostle, from whom my text is taken, is so *unruly*, so *untameable* an evil, that those who have made some good progress in religion in other respects, and through God's help have got the better of many other corruptions, have hitherto not succeeded in conquering this;—perhaps, from the power of self-deceit, have hardly in good earnest attempted to do it. Let me beg of you, therefore, your serious attention to the observations which I wish to offer, upon a vice so widely prevalent, and at the same time so utterly inconsistent with every part of the Christian character.

To prevent misapprehension, however, I

must remark, that there *are cases*, in which it is lawful to speak what we know to another's prejudice. We may be called on fairly to do so, either by zeal for the glory of God, or by a love of justice, or by a sincere desire to promote the reformation and amendment of him of whom we speak. When we are honestly satisfied in our consciences, that we have such reasons as these, for speaking of any fault or error committed by another, we are at liberty to do it. If, for instance, we know that any one has so far violated the laws of his country, that the general welfare of society requires that he should be punished; or if, when he has been charged with an offence by some other person, we are called upon to declare what we know before the civil magistrate, we not only may, but ought, to declare it. So again, a sincere desire for a neighbour's reformation, may very properly induce us to mention to him, in the spirit of gentleness and friendship, what we have seen or heard to his discredit; or, for the same good purpose, to speak of it, in the same spirit, to some one who is likely to have influence with him;—perhaps to the minister, under whose spiritual care he lives, who is especially appointed to watch for his soul, and to warn him against such practices as would lead him to destruction. Again, we may lawfully disclose what we know to another's prejudice when it is abso-

lutely necessary for the clearing of our own character, or that of some innocent person, unjustly traduced. Or if we see the young and inexperienced in danger of being led astray by the artifices of some bad man, of whose real character they are ignorant, we certainly do well to put them on their guard, and to warn them of the danger to which they are exposed. Excepting, however, in these and the like cases,—except either *justice* or *charity* clearly require us to speak,—we can hardly be too tender of our neighbour's reputation, or too careful that we say nothing that may in the slightest degree injure it. "Whether it be to friend or foe," says the son of Sirach, "talk not of other men's lives; and if thou canst without offence, reveal them not¹." Reveal them *not*; do not divulge what you know against any man, unless you are satisfied that you really do wrong to conceal it.

If we repeat whatever we have heard by common report, we shall probably in very many instances be chargeable with the guilt not only of evil-speaking or back-biting, but in some measure even of *slander* itself. For every one knows, that of the many ill-natured reports that are spread abroad, the greater part are not true;—at least not true to their full extent. Consequently, you are in dan-

¹ *Ecclesi. xix. 8.*

ger of being, to a certain degree, guilty of slander, whenever you say any thing to another man's discredit, which you have not very good reason to believe to be true. To plead, that you only say what you have heard, and what multitudes report as well as you, is no excuse whatever. The guilt of slander attaches, not only to its first author, but in some degree to every one that gives it circulation.

But even supposing that you are well assured that what you say is true; still, you have no right to say it; you still are chargeable with the unmanly, unchristian, vice of *back-biting* and *evil-speaking*. Reflect now for a moment on the greatness of this sin. You all are sensible of the value of character. You all know, that there are few things which every man holds more dear than his good name. It is in itself of great worth—and upon it many depend, almost entirely, for the means of subsistence—so that if you rob them of their character, you rob them of their means of getting their bread. Many of those who are in the habit of allowing themselves to talk freely of their neighbour's faults, would be highly offended to be themselves suspected of *thieving*—they look upon a *thief* with contempt; and think that nothing should tempt them to stoop so low as to be guilty of so base a sin. But are they less guilty, when they deprive a man of his

character? They would be shocked to be supposed capable of robbing him of his money, but think little of robbing him of that, which is dearer to him than money, — for “a good name,” says Solomon, “is rather to be chosen than great riches.” A common thief steals perhaps to relieve his necessities; — that is no excuse for him, certainly; but still he seems to get something by his crime. The *evil-speaker* or *backbiter* robs a man of his most valuable possession, without having even an appearance of advantage to himself to plead. Again, the thief, if he should be brought to repentance, may testify the sincerity of his repentance by making restitution, by “giving again that that he has robbed.” The *evil-speaker*, however, puts reparation out of his power. When brought to repentance, he may wish to *unsay* what he has said, and *undo* the evil that he has done, but it is now too late. The evil report through his means has spread far and wide; it is uttered by a hundred tongues; and he has no means of stopping its mischievous progress. And shall we, my friends, pretend that we are Christians, and be guilty towards any fellow-mortal of such a cruel injury as this? —

The foundation of the several branches of our duty towards our neighbour is, that we

should love him as ourself; and we know, that "he that loveth not his brother abideth in death," in spiritual death, tending to death eternal. But how can we pretend that we thus love our neighbour, when we wrong him in so tender a part,—when we despoil him of what he holds most dear? Again, the rule by which our conduct towards other men should be regulated, is, that golden one of "doing as we would be done by;—of "doing unto all men as we would they should "do unto us." And are we willing to have our character torn to pieces, our good name stolen away from us, by the backbiting tongues of the malicious or of the thoughtless? If we are jealous of our own reputation, if we feel—painfully and deeply feel—when men "shoot out their arrows, even "bitter words," against us, and strive to lower us in the opinion of those among whom we dwell,—let us not be guilty of inflicting on others a wound, which we feel so acutely ourselves;—let us not do to others an injury, which, when offered to ourselves, we complain of as cowardly and cruel. A man who speaks evil of his *friend*, is justly looked upon as base and unworthy; but the Christian religion, which requires us to love all men as ourselves, requires us so far to treat all men as friends, as not to injure them in this manner. Attend particularly to the words of my text: "Speak not evil one of

“another, *brethren*,” says the apostle. We are all *brethren*, brethren by creation, and still more brethren by redemption and adoption. For brethren, in any way, to injure each other, is most unreasonable and unnatural. “Sirs, ye are *brethren*,” says Moses, “why do ye *wrong* one to another?” The affecting consideration of such a relationship, ought to have withheld *them*; and it ought still to withhold us from speaking evil one of another.

And in order to be liable to this heavy guilt, it is not necessary, that what you lay to your neighbour's charge should be some heavy and serious crime. If you unnecessarily say any thing to *lower his character*, though you impute to him only what are deemed trivial faults or follies, yet, if it tends really to *lower his character*, you offend against both the precepts and the spirit of religion.

Various are the ways in which men are guilty of the sin of evil-speaking. Some men attack their neighbour's character by a direct and specific charge;—some say, that they repeat merely what they have heard from others, thus weakly thinking to remove the blame from their own shoulders;—others will *profess* to disbelieve some ill-natured story, which, however, they are careful to repeat, and, if they can, to get believed by those to whom they address it;—and others,

again, if they have no absolute faults to charge, will seek to lower their neighbour's reputation, by ascribing his fairest deeds to some unworthy motives.

This last description of evil-speaking is what is expressed by the word *detraction*. *Detraction* consists in endeavouring to lower a good character, by pointing out blemishes or picking holes in it, by misrepresenting its virtues, and exaggerating its defects. If, for instance, a man is liberal in giving, the *detractor* will call him profuse and ostentatious; if he is frugal, he calls him pitiful and sordid. In the representations of a man addicted to *detraction*, a reasonable prudence becomes worldly cunning; bravery is termed rashness; humility, meanness; and religion, hypocrisy.

It would be endless to mention all the various manners of hurting a man's character. They all fall under the general name of *evil-speaking* or *backbiting*, are all chargeable with the heavy degree of guilt which I have endeavoured to point out to you. And perhaps those are little less to blame, who encourage evil-speaking by listening to it with readiness and attention. It is an old maxim, that if there were no receivers of stolen goods, there would be no thieves; and it may be said with equal truth, that if there were no listeners, there would be no tale-bearers, no evil-speakers.

Nor will the guilt of evil-speaking appear the less, when we inquire into the causes from which it proceeds; in which inquiry, we shall be led to consider some of the *pleas* which men sometimes advance in *excuse* for it. One great cause of it is *pride* and *self-conceit*. Elated with the imagination of their own virtue, with the conceit that they are not as other men are, men are tempted to endeavour to blacken the character of their neighbour, that their own may appear the brighter by contrast, and that they may be permitted to assume a sort of superiority over them. "Pride," we know, "was not made for man;" and we are told in Scripture, that "the proud in heart are an abomination to the Lord:" when this, therefore, is the source of evil-speaking, a man is guilty of a complicated, of a double sin.

An opposite description of men fall into evil-speaking from a cause the reverse of this. Having by their follies and their vices, destroyed and ruined their own characters, they are anxious to bring every one else down to the same level with themselves, that thus their reputation may no longer be *darkened* by comparison with those that are *unblemished*. Perhaps too, they know so much ill of themselves, that they are really disposed to think that there is nothing but evil in man, and that every appearance of goodness and religion is merely a pretext and a

cheat. This, I suspect, is no unusual cause of backbiting; but it is a cause which most men will be ashamed to own.

A third source of this sin of evil-speaking is the spirit of *revenge*. A man has received, or thinks that he has received, some injury, which the corrupted feelings of his nature prompt him to revenge. The dread of the correction of the laws of the land, or perhaps the fear of an encounter with him whom he deems his enemy, prevents him from avenging himself with his *hand*. He therefore seeks to do it with the *tongue*. Under the influence of this dark passion he attacks his enemy's character, and by injuring his good name inflicts wounds of the worst and sorest nature. Now you all know, that every feeling and gratification of revenge is forbidden by the religion of Christ. "Dearly beloved," says the apostle, "*avenge* not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay," saith the Lord ¹." And if we are absolutely forbidden to avenge ourselves in any other way, least of all should we seek revenge in so base and dastardly a manner as by *backbiting* or *evil-speaking*.

Some men, again, will run down a neighbour's character without any ill-feeling toward him, but for the sake of *paying court*,

¹ Rom. xii. 19.

of making themselves acceptable, to him to whom they are speaking;—who, as they imagine, has conceived some dislike to the person whose character is assailed. Those who are guilty of evil-speaking from such considerations, are, if possible, more inexcusable, and chargeable with greater meanness, even than those whom I last mentioned.

But perhaps, after all, the most usual cause of evil-speaking is a mere love of talking, coupled with the vanity of seeming to know more than the rest of the world, and attended by a general spirit of levity and thoughtlessness. But surely, a man's good name and reputation is far too serious and valuable a thing to be trifled away in this light and foolish manner. Inconsideration in matters of religion is a fault utterly unworthy of an immortal and responsible being, where ourselves alone are concerned; but, it becomes doubly blameable, where it occasions so serious a wrong to a neighbour as injuring his reputation. Remember that striking passage in the Proverbs of Solomon; “As a mad man, who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death; so is the man that deceiveth” (or as it is in another version, that *backbiteth*) “his neighbour, and saith, “Am not I in sport¹?”

And as evil-speaking is thus evil in itself,

¹ Prov. xxvi. 8. 19.

and in the causes from which it proceeds: so is it evil in the consequences which it produces. Besides the deep—the often irreparable—injury which it does to him, whose character is assailed by it, it naturally tends to occasion lasting divisions and animosities; it leads on to hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness. As, “where there is no tale-bearer, the strife ceaseth,” so on the other hand, a tale-bearer separateth very friends, and his words are as wounds¹.

From all these considerations, you may well suppose that the sin of evil-speaking is every where strongly spoken against in the Scripture. Holy David, in his zeal for true religion, exclaims, “Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I destroy.” And in the fifteenth Psalm gives it as one of the characteristics of him who should ascend the holy hill of the Lord, that he “hath not slandered his neighbour;” or, as it is in the Bible version of the Psalms, “he that backbiteth not, with his tongue,—nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.” Our blessed Lord classes *false witness* with murder, and adultery; and St. Paul ranks *backbiters* with fornicators, and murderers, and haters of God; with those of whom he expressly says, that they “shall

¹ Prov. xxvi. 20. xviii. 8.

² Ps. ci. 6.

³ Ps. xv. 3.

⁴ Rom. jn. 30.

"not inherit the kingdom of God." Again, in the second Epistle to Timothy, he mentions false accusation as one of the sins of those who have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof," who are Christians in profession and outward appearance, not in reality. And to the like purport the apostle, from whom my text is taken, assures us, that "if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain¹." He may *seem*, and may pretend, to be religious; but if he *bridleth not his tongue*, if he gives way to evil-speaking and backbiting, or slandering, "he deceiveth his own heart," and *his religion is vain*; it is *vain* and ineffectual as to regulating his conduct in this life, and will be found to have been *vain* in the life to come. "By thy words," says our Saviour, "thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned²."

Let us therefore, my friends, strive to correct both in ourselves, and in those with whom we converse, the pernicious and dangerous sin of *evil-speaking*. With holy David let us resolve to take heed unto our ways, that we offend not with our tongue³. Let us carefully guard against evil-speaking ourselves; and give no encouragement to it in others, by appearing to listen to it with ap-

¹ James i. 26.

² Matt. xii. 37.

³ Ps. xxix. 1.

probation and pleasure. Let us ever remember, that if guilty of backbiting, we offend against the fundamental precepts of our holy religion,—against the love of our neighbour,—and against the rule of doing as we would be done by. Let us remember, that by this vice we are guilty of a mean sort of stealing, of robbing our neighbour of that which is dearer to him than his money or his goods.

To guard against this sin will require unremitting care and watchfulness, for the habits of society and our own corruption render us continually liable to fall into it. We shall however think such care and watchfulness well bestowed, if we seriously reflect upon the hateful nature and dangerous consequences of the sin of evil-speaking. And because our care and vigilance will be ineffectual without God's assistance,—since “the tongue is an unruly evil, which no man,” of his own strength alone, “hath tamed or can tame¹,”—let us seek from heaven strength equal to the task, let us beseech God to “set a watch over our lips, and to “keep the door of our mouth,” to restrain us by his grace from slander and evil-speaking, and to render our tongues, as well as all our other members, instruments of righteousness and of his glory.

¹ James iii. 8.

THE PRAYER.

O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee in any thing, particularly in the proper government of the tongue, do thou by thy grace assist us in controlling that unruly member. Set a watch, O Lord, over our lips, and keep the door of our mouth, that we may so take heed unto our ways, as that we may not offend in tongue. Keep us from the base and unchristian sin of slandering and backbiting, and grant that our speech, instead of injuring our neighbour, may be made the instrument of his edification and of thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXVI.

RAILING OR ABUSIVE LANGUAGE.

1 Cor. vi. 10.

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor REVILERS, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

THE guilt of *evil-speaking* is generally felt, and there are few who do not acknowledge the necessity of guarding against it. There are, however, I apprehend, many persons, who, though they think it wrong and cowardly—(as it most certainly is)—to speak evil of a man in his absence, make no scruple of speaking evil of him in his presence;—who will not traduce a man behind his back, but freely allow themselves to abuse him to his face. Nothing is more common than to hear those who are irritated, or provoked, or out of humour with any one, giving vent to their angry passion by abusive language, by calling him reproachful names, and laying to his charge a variety of crimes. This is the sin, which in Scripture is called *railing* or

reviling, and a very heavy sin it is. Nothing can be more opposite to the meek, and gentle, and forbearing spirit of Christianity; nothing more ~~plainly~~ ~~proceeds~~ from the corruption of our nature. Accordingly you will observe, that in the passage which I have chosen for my text, *revilers*, that is, persons who are ~~in the habit of using~~ abusive language, are classed with idolaters, adulterers, and thieves; and, together with them, declared to be incapable of inheriting the kingdom of God.

A sin of the tongue which is so repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, and so dreadful in its consequences, appears to require to be considered by itself. I must, however, before I proceed farther, observe, that there are cases, in which it is not only lawful, but ~~advisable~~, to tell a man to his face of his faults, and plainly to "set before him the things which he has done." It is lawful to do this, whenever we are satisfied in our own consciences that we do it from a real concern either for the glory of God, or for the good of man, — of him particularly to whom we thus address ourselves; — and when we do it without indecent vehemence, but with calmness and temper. For instance, it is oftentimes expedient for a magistrate to speak in terms of reproof to an evil-doer; both for the purpose of making him feel something of remorse or shame for his evil deeds; and

also for the sake of public example, and of inducing others to avoid the crime which they hear thus publicly reprov'd. So again, the ministers of religion are oftentimes required by their office, to tell men of their sins to their face, for the sake of humbling them, for the sake of repressing their proud self-conceit, and of bringing them to repentance. And they may for these good purposes, and for the public correction of sin, find it expedient sometimes to do this with a degree of publicity, and before many witnesses. Thus St. Paul directs Timothy to *reprove, and to rebuke*, as well as to exhort¹; and he bids Titus to *rebuke* certain *men sharply*, "that they may be sound in the *"faith"*². Again, the former of these apostolical men he charges in another place, "to *"rebuke* them that sin"—that sin, that is, notoriously, and scandalously—openly "before all, that others also may fear"³. In a similar manner in the Old Testament the Almighty bids his servants, the prophets, to "cry aloud," and "spare not;" to show his "people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their *"sins"*⁴. And accordingly, we often find the messengers of the most High using the strongest language of reproof. Thus Isaiah calls the Jews, "a people laden

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 2.² 1 Tim. v. 10.³ Titus i. 13.⁴ Isaiah lviii. 1.

“with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters¹.” Thus John the Baptist termed the Scribes and Pharisees, a “generation of vipers² ;” and our blessed Lord himself addresses the Jewish teachers in various terms of reproach ; he calls them “an evil and adulterous generation³,” fools and blind guides, hypocrites, and children of the devil⁴. And the ministers of religion *now* may sometimes feel themselves obliged by the sacred commission which they bear, to reprove and to rebuke, perhaps to use the language of reproach ; though it must still be done “with all long-suffering and gentleness.” Even private persons may, and sometimes ought, to address themselves in this manner to those whom they observe doing wrong, in order that they may bring them to amendment and reformation : “Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour,” said the Jewish law, “and not suffer sin upon him⁵.”

In these and the like cases, to tell a man openly of his faults, though it is in a degree to speak evil of him to his face, is certainly lawful, and is not to be called *reviling*. It is right in itself, and proceeds from a right principle, from a concern for the honour of

¹ Isaiah i. 4.

² Matt. iii. 7.

³ Matt. xii. 39.

⁴ John viii. 44.

⁵ Lev. xix. 17.

religion, and the welfare of our neighbour's soul.

A man is guilty of the sin of *railing* or *reviling*, when not from any right principle, but from the instigation of his own corrupt passions, from pride, from anger, or from revenge, he assails another with reproachful language, calls him abusive names, and taunts and insults him, by laying to his charge either the faults of which he has actually been guilty, or sins of which he is innocent. For you will observe, we have no right to reproach a man even with the sins, with which he really is chargeable, in a taunting, insulting manner, or from a feeling of anger or contempt. And if we reproach him with crimes of which he is innocent, if we bestow on him injurious names, which he in no way deserves, and "lay to his charge things which he knows not," we are guilty of the worst sort of reviling; are guilty of something like *slander* or *calumny*, as well as of *railing*. And as we are thus chargeable with double guilt, we expose ourselves to double punishment.

I would here remark by the way, that the offensive and dreadful practice of *swearing at any one*, of cursing, and *damning* him, falls directly under the prohibition of the text. Not only is it a flagrant violation of the third commandment, a breach of our duty towards God, but it is also a very bad species of rail-

ing. It is an expression of unchristian intolerance and ill-will, which if properly considered, could hardly proceed from any one who had not utterly thrown off all regard for religion.

The sin of *reviling*, as I just now hinted, sometimes proceeds principally from *pride*. Those of an overbearing temper, of a haughty and arrogant spirit, assume that right of treating with contempt, those whom they think beneath them,—their servants, perhaps, or labourers,—and of expressing this contempt on the most trifling occasions in injurious language. Now injurious language, when it proceeds from any vicious principle whatever, is a grievous sin; but surely, it becomes peculiarly unmanly and disgraceful, when addressed to those who, from their circumstances and situation in life, are to a certain degree precluded from answering. It is very ungenerous to take advantage of any little difference in rank or station for such a purpose.

Parents also I should earnestly exhort, not to make use of any description of rough language to their children, for the purpose of enforcing their authority. It is distressing to hear a father or mother angrily upbraiding a child with stupidity or ignorance,—which probably is not in any degree its own fault;—or addressing it in taunting or insulting words. It is in itself a very pernicious

habit, and the effects which it may have upon the temper and character of the child are most painful. It tends to lessen its love and filial respect for its parents, to sour its temper, to render it needlessly unhappy, and to give it the habit of using the same bad language to its play-fellows, perhaps even to the parents themselves.

The most general occasion of railing or abusive language, is *anger*. When a person is provoked, or put out of temper by any one, he is apt to express his anger in reproachful words; sometimes in curses and imprecations. He would perhaps vent his wrath by actual violence and striking, but being withheld from this by the strong arm of the law, or by the fear of bodily hurt, he has recourse to the violence of the tongue. It is possible, we know, to be angry without being guilty of sin: but when anger expresses itself in this manner, it is both sinful in itself, and the occasion of sin. It is to no purpose, therefore, for a man, when he is guilty of *reviling*, of using reproachful language, to say that he was *provoked* to it, that he was in a *passion*, and could not help it. It is the duty of a Christian not to be “easily provoked¹,” but to keep his passions—the passion of anger among the rest—within proper bounds. To assist him in doing this he has the precepts

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

and the sanction of religion, and above all, the offer of the help of the Holy Spirit. If he does not seek or make use of this help, and disregards these precepts and sanctions, he disregards them at his peril.

Men and women are particularly ready to advance this excuse, when they have themselves been assailed with abusive language; when accosted with reproachful words, they think that they must have a right to answer in the same strain. Their adversary is consequently more irritated; and they thus go on vying with each other in abuse, and uttering words and reproaches most disgraceful to those who use them; and not only repugnant to every feeling and principle of religion, but shocking to common decency. If after the ferment of anger has passed away, any expostulation is offered on the sinfulness and scandal of such conduct, the reply will probably be, "He or she called me names first, and surely I had a *right* to answer in the same manner; was *I* to be abused and reviled, and yet was I bound to bear it without retorting?" Believe me, you had no *right* to answer abuse with abuse; you *were bound* to bear it without retorting. This would have been your wisest course in common prudence. While "grievous words," such as those which you were provoked to use, "stir up anger," a "soft answer turneth

“away wrath!” “If you had answered *mildly*, or made no answer at all, your adversary would have been ashamed of going on, or the fire of his anger would have gone out for want of fuel. And this ought to have been your course, from the well-known principles of Christianity. I cannot too often remind you, that our holy religion allows us in no case to revenge ourselves; and particularly cautions us not to answer abuse with abuse. St. Peter expressly bids us, not to render “evil for evil, or *railing for railing*, but contrariwise blessing¹.” We are not to render *railing for railing*: nothing can be plainer. In the same spirit, our blessed Lord, in his divine sermon on the mount, had said “Bless them that curse you².” This precept is to be understood of all those, who in any way abuse or revile you, or treat you with contempt: “bless and curse not:” give good language for bad: answer them not in the spirit in which they assail you.

Our Lord himself gave us an example, that we should follow his steps: and his example we are bound to follow, if we would be partakers of his resurrection. But he especially bids us to imitate him in meekness and gentleness under injuries. We are, by the apostle, for our direction, particularly charged to bear

¹ Prov. xv. 1.² 1 Pet. iii. 9.³ Matt. v. 44.

in mind that Christ “when he was *reviled*, “*reviled* not again;—when he suffered, he “threatened not.” Suffer me again, therefore, solemnly and earnestly to warn you, that no bad language addressed to you will justify you in using the like in return. I am not speaking now of what privilege you may think you may claim, from the customs or the spirit of the world. With these customs and that spirit we have nothing to do—except in many cases to avoid and to shun them. But I am speaking of what is your duty as *Christians*, of what is required of you by your religion. Be assured, that that religion has no principle more clear, no precept more express, than that you are not to answer abuse with abuse, that you are not to render railing for railing.

Not only in the case of being ourselves assailed with reproachful words, but in every case, the use of such language—excepting as I stated towards the outset of this discourse, where it is required by, and proceeds from, some right principle—is utterly inconsistent with the Christian character. It generally, if not always, implies a degree of *contempt*;—now utter contempt we are not permitted to feel for any fellow-creature, still less for any fellow-Christian. According to Solomon, it is “he that is void of wisdom,” and he

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 23.

only, "that despiseth his neighbour¹." Remember the words of our Saviour, "Who-soever shall say to his brother, Raca," (that is, worthless fellow,) "shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire²." Here the word *fool* is used as an expression of the lowest contempt. Reviling, or using abusive language, is so great a sin, that St. Paul advises us to avoid the society of those who are guilty of it. "I have written unto you," says he, "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother," that is, that professes to be a Christian, "be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a *railer*, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat³." A *railer*—a person who is in the habit of attacking his neighbour, with rough language—is here, you see, ranked by St. Paul with idolaters, and fornicators and extortioners, and declared unworthy of being admitted into the company of Christians. And as he is unfit for all good and Christian society on earth; so are we assured that he will be shut out from the blessed society in heaven; for the text positively assures us, that "revilers" shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, no less than murderers and adulterers.

Let me therefore entreat you, my friends, to take heed unto your ways, that you offend

¹ Prov. xi. 12.² Matt. v. 22.³ 1 Cor. v. 11.

not in your tongue in this or any other manner. If you desire *life* in this world, and in the world to come, and would fain “see “good days,—refrain” your “tongue from “evil¹.” Let nothing—neither injurious actions nor abusive words—*nothing*, in short, *whatever*, induce you so far to forget your Christian character and your Christian hopes, as to be guilty of *reviling*, of using reproachful language. Pray to God for his grace, to keep you from being “provoked so far as to “speak unadvisedly with your lips.” Bear ever in your minds the recollection of the example which you have to follow, the example of the meek and lowly Jesus; and in compliance with that example, and with the genius and precepts of the religion which you profess, “let all bitterness, and wrath, “and *clamour*, and *evil speaking*, be put away “from you, with all malice.”

THE PRAYER.

Give me grace, O Lord, so to take heed to my ways, as that I may not offend by my tongue. Enable me to refrain my lips from uttering injurious reproachful language, however I may be provoked. Make me careful never to render railing for railing; but grant that I may follow the example of thy meek and lowly Son, who when he was reviled reviled not again, and threatened not when he suffered reproach and contumely. Hear me, O Lord, for the sake of the same thy Son, our Lord and Saviour.

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 10.

SERMON XXVII.

CHARITY.

1 COR. xiii. 13.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

THERE is, perhaps, no single chapter in the sacred volume, which better deserves to be repeatedly read and studied, and committed to memory, than the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. It sets before us the nature, and properties, and excellence of *charity*;—that greatest of Christian graces, without which all our doings, all our acquirements, are nothing worth. The occasion of St. Paul's being led to give this beautiful description of charity was this. The church of Corinth appears to have been troubled with many irregularities, to have been much divided into different religious parties or factions; and these divisions and irregularities appear to have in some degree originated in the improper exercise of the miraculous gifts

of the Spirit, such as the gifts of tongues, and of prophecy, and the power of working miracles, which were designed to assist in the extension of the Christian faith. These gifts form ~~the subject of the~~ ^{the} twelfth chapter, and St. Paul returns again to the consideration of them in the fourteenth; but between these two chapters, he inserts, in the thirteenth, his account of *charity*, without which he tells them all the gifts, of which he had been speaking, however excellent in themselves, and however greatly to be desired, were *nothing worth*, were useless with respect to salvation. To the description of charity thus given by St. Paul, let us now direct our attention. You will give me your attention the more readily, if you reflect that charity is a grace or virtue, without which you cannot be saved; that all talents, and acquirements, and seeming good works, in a religious point of view, are useless to the possessor of them, if they are unaccompanied by *charity*. It is the more necessary that you should attend, because many mistaken notions on the subject of charity are apt to go forth into the world, and to pass current among men.

Possibly some of you may be ignorant, that the Epistles of St. Paul (with the exception perhaps of that to the Hebrews) were originally written in the Greek language. Now the Greek word here translated

charity, is generally rendered *love*. : For instance, St. Paul, in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans, repeatedly speaks of *love* as being the fulfilling of the law. Love, in that passage, and charity in this which we are now considering, are expressed by exactly the same Greek word; so that you are to consider *charity* as being merely another word for *love*. The whole of Christian duty is comprised in the love of God,—which our Saviour styles the first and great commandment,—and in the love of man. Charity, in its most extended sense, comprises the love of both; and as it regards our fellow-creatures, it means the love of our neighbour for God's sake; it means a real heartfelt goodwill towards men in general, founded on Christian principles. Accordingly, when St. Paul speaks of charity or love as being “the more excellent way;” as being that without which every thing else is “nothing worth;” as being the *greatest* of Christian graces; it is in the same sense in which, in the passage to the Romans first alluded to, he had spoken of love as being “the fulfilling of the law.”

Keeping then in mind that charity is merely another word for love,—the love of God and man,—let us proceed to the more particular consideration of the account here given of it by St. Paul.

He begins, “Though I speak with the
“tongues of men and of angels, and have not

“charity, I am become as sounding brass or
“a tinkling cymbal.”

The miraculous gift of tongues, of speaking foreign languages, was indispensable to the first preaching of the Gospel, and was accordingly conferred on the day of Pentecost. And in all ages, some men have been distinguished above others for the talent of speaking with eloquence, of expressing their sentiments with readiness and ease, in a graceful and striking manner. We every day see the effect of this faculty of speaking, and how easily the uninstructed and ignorant, indeed how *all men* in some degree, are led by a man who speaks readily and fluently. None of these talents, however, whether miraculous or natural, not even the eloquence of angels, are of any real benefit to the possessor of them, without *charity*. He has no more substantial worth than an empty musical instrument, “than sounding brass, or a “tinkling cymbal.”

“And though I have the gift of prophecy,
“and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that
“I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”

The gift of prophecy, in the first age of the Church, sometimes extended to the foretelling of future events; and in this way it was possessed by Agabus and others; and sometimes seems rather to have implied a super-

natural penetration into the deepest sense of the oracles of God. The *faith* spoken of in this verse, is the faith of miracles, as distinguished from saving faith. Saving faith is the ground-work of religion, and is never separated from charity, since it "worketh by love¹." In the first age of the Gospel, however, men who were not effectually influenced by saving faith, were yet endued with the faith of miracles; the faith which both here and in St. Matthew is spoken of as removing mountains. Thus our Lord says, that many would come unto him at the last day, who would say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"—who would yet perish, because they were workers of iniquity²; in other words, because they were without the genuine Christian temper of mind, here styled charity.

The next verse is particularly worthy of observation: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor. Some people seem to confine the idea of charity to alms-giving. If a man should give all his goods to feed the poor, he would

¹ Gal. v. 6.

² Matt. vii. 22.

probably be cried up as a very charitable person; his neighbour would say, How good he is! and would load him with thanks and praises. St. Paul, however, here tells us, that a man may do this, and yet be without charity; and if you think for a moment, your own sense and reason will tell you the same. Giving assistance to those who are in need, is certainly a most necessary duty; and a charitable man will give alms in proportion to his means; but then, as we have just said, the mere giving of alms does not of itself prove a man to be charitable. He may possibly give his goods to feed the poor, from vanity, from ostentation, from a love of the praise of man, from a desire to get their good-will and good word, and from a hundred other motives, in which real charity has no part. So again, a man may give his body to be burned ostensibly for the sake of religion—may suffer martyrdom—and yet be without charity, without real religious principle. He may encounter even this last extremity, from sturdiness and stubbornness of disposition, or from *pride*, which, under another name, is called a sense of honour. From motives probably such as these, we have heard of a man suffering martyrdom in the cause of atheism. But no alms, however liberal, no sufferings however acute and courageously borne, are of any real benefit, if unaccompanied by charity.

Having made these general observations on the nature and excellence of charity in general, St. Paul next goes on to mention some of its marks or properties. And, first, "charity suffereth long." It is patient under the injuries and oppositions, which it meets with in the world. A man under the influence of his natural feelings, is too often irritable and touchy. He, perhaps, seems almost on the watch for occasions of ill-humour; takes offence where none was intended; and is eager and hasty to express his resentment by his manner, his words, and his actions. This he considers as a mark of proper spirit. This readiness to take offence, and to resent injuries, is certainly a mark of *spirit*; of the spirit of the world—the *evil world*—but not the spirit of charity. "Charity suffereth long;" it is patient under injuries, it makes all possible allowances for the weaknesses, the tempers, and the prejudices of other men, and bears with them in the spirit of gentleness and meekness.

But charity not only suffers with patience—it is also *kind*—ready to do whatever kind offices are in her power, obliging in manner and behaviour, careful not to give unnecessary pain, but anxious to promote the happiness and well-being of all around her. She is glad to relieve the distress of those who are in want, to alleviate the sufferings of the afflicted; and, in short, to rejoice with them

that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

This being the case, it follows as a matter of course, that charity *envieth not*. Envy is a secret displeasure of mind, at seeing some other persons possessed of an advantage which we ourselves want. This is one of the most dark and evil feelings of our corrupted nature. Those who feel it most, are ashamed to own it. It is classed by the apostles together with strife, deceit, malice, and murder. And as it is a most sinful affection of mind, so it is also a most uneasy and painful one. "Envy," says the wise man, "is as the rottenness of the bones¹;" and again, "envy slayeth the silly ones." Evil, however, and shameful as envy is, it is, I fear, but too common. For how many are the men, who feel something of this passion, at seeing others, whom they perhaps think less deserving, better off in the world than themselves! How many are the men, who feel out of humour at seeing some advantage, some gift, for instance, bestowed upon another, while they themselves do not share in it! They perhaps feel a degree of ill-will, though they hardly dare acknowledge it, against both him who gives and him who receives the benefit; and are tempted to catch at any opportunity of running them down.

¹ Prov. xiv. 30.

Nothing can well be more contrary to charity—more contrary to Christian principle. A man who really loves his neighbour will rejoice to see any good happen to him. He takes a kind of interest in his well-doing, and is far from feeling as if he himself was worse off than before, because another is better off. He takes pleasure in seeing instances of kindness, even if he derive no other benefit from them himself.

“Charity vaunteth not itself.” A true and real Christian is not disposed to vaunt, and *show off* himself;—is not disposed unnecessarily and rashly to put himself forward; to thrust himself into situations to which he is not called. Instead of presumptuously engaging in matters which are too high for him, he is inclined rather to be diffident, and unpretending; to study to be quiet, and to mind his own business¹; according to the expression of the Psalmist, to “refrain his soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother².”

And as “charity vaunteth not itself,” so also it “is not *puffed up*” with pride, and self-conceit. Both the Scriptures and reason assure us, that *humility* is one of the leading graces of the Christian character. “Pride was not made for man;” least of all for a *Christian*. He knows, and practically feels,

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 11.

² Psalm cxxxi. 3.

that poverty of spirit or lowliness of mind is the disposition which best becomes him; the disposition which was most earnestly inculcated by our Lord, both by precept and example, upon all his followers. He acknowledges that whatever advantages he may seem to possess, were all conferred by the bounty of the Most High; that he has nothing—no talent, no virtue, no grace,—but what he hath received, and therefore has not the smallest right to glory as if he had not received it. He acknowledges, that “all his sufficiency is of God.” He feels too in himself so much infirmity, so much folly, and so much sin, that instead of being puffed up, instead of being conceited, and arrogant, instead of looking down upon other men, as if they were beneath him, he is rather disposed to comply with the apostolical precepts, submit “yourselves one to another in the fear of God¹,” “in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves².”

A man who, from the influence of Christian charity, is “not puffed up,” will be, comparatively, in small danger of behaving “*unseemly*,”—of behaving himself in any manner which does not *beseem*, does not become the Christian character, or which might bring discredit upon the Christian profession. There will be in his behaviour nothing scornful or haughty, nothing of improper levity.

¹ Eph. v. 21.

² Phil. ii. 3.

Charity seeketh not her own. A moderate and well-regulated attention to a man's own interests and concerns, is not only allowed, but required, both by Scripture and reason, in order that a man may not only be able to provide for those of his own house, but may have also something to give to him that needeth.—Without such attention, his substance, instead of being a benefit to the deserving, would become the prey of the unjust and the rapacious; and he would be reduced to become himself a pensioner on the bounty of others. A man accordingly may be a charitable man, even though he should in a temperate manner require the payment of what is justly due to him.

When it is said, “Charity seeketh not her own,” I consider the expression as meaning charity is not *selfish*;—she does not so attend to her own concerns, as to be regardless of those of others. On the contrary, she takes a lively interest in the welfare of all around, is anxious to promote it by every means in her power, and will often, to a certain degree, neglect herself for the sake of helping or benefiting a neighbour. When St. Paul says, in the tenth chapter of this Epistle, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth¹”; and again, to the Philippians, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the

¹ 1 Cor. x. 24. .

“things of others¹,” I consider him, not as enjoining an utter carelessness about our own concerns;—this would be inconsistent with many other parts of his writings;—but as cautioning us against being *selfish*; as enjoining us not to be so taken up with ourselves, as to be inattentive to the good of others; as inculcating the duty of being ready often to *give up* to others, to be ready to assist them, even with some loss to ourselves.

The next character of charity is, that she is *not easily provoked*.

Nothing could contribute more to the peace and comfort, both of individuals and of society, than the diligent cultivation of this branch of charity. Men suffer themselves to be easily and violently provoked,—often about comparative trifles,—and then in the heat of their passion say and do things, of which in their cooler moments they would be ashamed, but which often lead on to the most fatal animosities; animosities which are destructive of charity, and consequently fatal to the safety of the soul.

The following property of charity, that it “thinketh no evil,” is capable of being understood in two senses; *both* in strict accordance with its general character. First, charity is unwilling to think evil of any one,

¹ Phil. ii. 4.

unless she is absolutely forced to do so. She is backward in paying attention to idle stories to another person's disadvantage, and willing to take every thing in the most favourable point of view.) Charity also thinketh evil *against* no one; she does not plan schemes of malice or revenge, or devise mischief against those who may have injured her.

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

To rejoice in iniquity;—to take pleasure in other men's sins, to exult in seeing them do that which is contrary to the will of God, and ruinous to their own souls;—is worthy only of the author of evil. There are, however, I fear, too many persons who are capable of partaking in this guilty joy; and who find either their malice or their pride gratified by the transgressions of others. Nothing can well be more contrary to charity—to that love of God and man, which naturally “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but “rejoiceth in the truth;” rejoiceth in the spreading and increase of true religion and sound morality, and wishes nothing more, than that they may ever flourish and increase among us.

The next verse is a very comprehensive one. “Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

Charity “beareth all things;”—as was

said under the first character of charity, is meek and patient under injuries and insults; ready to pass them over and make the best of them—unwilling to talk of, still more to exaggerate them. Charity “believeth all things;”—as she places implicit reliance upon all the promises of God, and in articles of faith is indisposed to seek for cavils and objections; so with regard to men she is frank and unsuspecting, ready to believe in the appearances of good which present themselves; and if she finds little present grounds for thinking well of any one, she still “hopeth all things,” hopes that a time will come when he will return to God, and be numbered among his children. Finally, charity “endureth all things,”—charity suffers with perfect resignation all the trials and afflictions which it is called upon to undergo. It never murmurs or repines under them, but submits to them as instances of God’s fatherly care; is sensible that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;” and can truly say from the bottom of the heart, “it is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

The excellence of charity further appears from what follows next. “Charity never faileth.” The miraculous gifts of prophecy and tongues, and supernatural knowledge, of which St. Paul had been speaking in the preceding verses, were all given for the

present exigencies of the Church, and were to last only for a time. They were too, at the best, incomplete and imperfect, and in a future state of existence there would be no necessity, no place for them. Those, who are admitted into heaven, will be blessed with a fulness of knowledge and understanding, as much above the imperfect knowledge even of the most knowing and learned man, as the knowledge of a man is above the knowledge of a child. "We know in part, "and we prophesy in part;" our knowledge here is partial and incomplete; but "when that which is perfect is come, then "that which is in part shall be done away. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I "understood as a child, I thought as a child: "but when I became a man, I put away "childish things. For now we see through "a glass darkly;" our knowledge of divine truth is here indistinct and confused: "but "then face to face;"—in heaven we shall see these truths as clearly and plainly as we see objects placed immediately before our eyes. "Now I know in part;" my knowledge here is partial and defective: "but then shall "I know, even as also I am known."

The chapter concludes, "And now abideth "faith, hope, charity; these three; but the "greatest of these is charity."

Can any thing be greater than faith and

hope? *Faith* is the very foundation of religion, and absolutely necessary to carry us to heaven; it is the instrument of our justification. *Hope*, too, is recommended by the apostles in the most earnest manner. The superiority of *charity* seems to consist in this, that *it never faileth*. In the world to come, there will, it should seem, be no more room for the exercise of faith, which will then terminate in sight. And hope will end in the actual possession and enjoyment of its object:—What a man seeth, and possesseth, how can he still hope for¹? But, though faith and hope thus terminate, “charity “never faileth.” *Charity*—the love of God and man—will continue to all eternity, and to all eternity will constitute the greater part of the enjoyment of those blessed spirits—the spirits of just men made perfect—who are there united in holy fellowship, in the presence of “God the Judge of all, and of Jesus “the Mediator of the new covenant.”

THE PRAYER.

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth: send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent

¹ Rom. viii. 24.

gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee; grant this for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

SERMON XXVIII¹.

DUTY OF MARRIED PERSONS.

EPH. v. 33.

“ Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

THE Scriptures represent the state of marriage as the most intimate and sacred of the relations of social life : “ For this cause shall “ a man leave father and mother, and shall “ cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be “ one flesh².” Consequently, those who have entered upon this holy state will find the observance of its peculiar duties to be of the utmost consequence to their peace and comfort in this world, and to their eternal happiness in the world to come. I am anxious therefore to induce such persons to fix their serious attention upon these duties,

¹ This Sermon is also published as a Tract, price 3*d*.

² Matt. xix. 5. Gen. ii. 24.

as they are suggested in the solemn and impressive Office for the celebration of Matrimony.

Where both husband and wife are influenced by real religious principles, and the union has been contracted, as it ought to have been contracted, “reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God,” there is good ground for trusting that it will meet with the Divine blessing, and that all its duties in every important instance will be carefully observed. Where, however, this holy state has been entered into, as I fear is sometimes the case, “unadvisedly, lightly, and wantonly,” either from the impulse of blind passion and appetite, or from the fear of the expense, or punishment, which the laws of the land sometimes bring upon those who sinfully give way to the desires of the flesh in their single state, there is the greatest cause for endeavouring to impress upon such persons the peculiar duties of the sacred relation which they have contracted.

Of all the duties of the marriage state, the great foundation is *love*; by which word I mean, not the short-lived offspring of fancy or desire; but a strong, fervent, deep-rooted attachment to each other. Throughout the whole compass of moral obligation it may be truly said, in the language of inspiration, that *love is the fulfilling of the law*. The love of God is the best ground-work and source of

all the duties of the first Table; the love of our neighbour, according to the saying of St. Paul, comprises all those of the second; and the various relative duties, which are so many branches of the second Table, are all best grounded and contained in *love*. Love consequently stands foremost in the solemn expression of consent in the marriage service, and in the still more solemn vow entered into at God's altar.

One of the chief causes for which matrimony was ordained was, "the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." Even if love is unhappily wanting, married persons have still engaged, and are bound, in point of absolute duty, to do all that they can for each other's happiness and advantage; to do all that they can to render their partner's life easy and comfortable. But where these endeavours proceed solely from a sense of obligation, and not from affection, they will be cold and heartless, and comparatively ineffectual.—Where they are the offspring of real attachment, they will be easy and natural, and of tenfold efficacy in advancing the happiness of the married state. Every instance of prosperity will, from being thus shared, become doubly gratifying, and the sufferings of adversity, affliction, and pain, will be lightened by the society and mutual support,

by the help and comfort derived from each other.

Love, therefore, being both a duty in itself solemnly promised and vowed, and also the best means of rendering the performance of the other duties of this state easy and delightful, married persons can hardly be too careful in avoiding whatever may lessen or destroy it, and in attending to the means of its preservation and increase. Be on your guard against all those little instances of ill-humour, or of violence, or impatience of temper, which too often undermine, and at length totally overthrow, all conjugal affection. Be always ready to comply with each other's wishes and inclinations; and do not thwart or cross them, unless when compelled by a sense of duty. It is possible that your partner's natural temper may be faulty; it may, perhaps, be hasty and impatient; or may have a tendency to peevishness and sullenness. By prudence and good management, guided by love, you may be able in great measure to check and cure these imperfections. And, on the other hand, by ill-judged opposition, by meeting them with ill-temper and anger, you may increase and inflame them to the utter ruin of all domestic happiness. Little differences or disagreements may perhaps occasionally happen; do not aggravate them by impatience or undue warmth, either in words, or in look and

manner. The advice of Solomon admits of universal application, but is particularly applicable to any thing like dissension between husband and wife: "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with." And again, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." By a soft answer, or in some cases, by no answer at all, endeavour gently to soothe and turn away those angry feelings which are so destructive of domestic harmony. Never engage in dispute; and, above all, never dispute about trifles. Indeed, almost every thing is a trifle, when put in competition with the risk of endangering conjugal affection.

Do not pretend to say, that you never discovered these faults of temper before marriage; but consider, that the engagement, which you have contracted is indissoluble; that you have taken your partner *for better or worse*; and, that no imperfection of temper, of which you were not previously aware, any more than an alteration in your outward circumstances, by which you become richer or poorer, can in any degree alter the solemn obligation which you have voluntarily contracted, and of which both

^a Prov. xvii. 14.

^b Prov. xv. 1.

your interest and your duty require you to make the best¹.

¹ “ Argue not about trifles, which no two ever disputed
 “ for yet, but in order to the vanity of a victory ; for, in
 “ themselves, they are not of moment enough to defray
 “ the charges of the breath expended on them. But then
 “ consider, that in every victory of this sort there are *two*,
 “ one triumphing, and the other triumphed over ; and
 “ that a victory or triumph is the act of an adversary,
 “ not of a friend ; nor at all possible where there is but
 “ one. In all cases, therefore, of none, or of little weight,
 “ the best way is, to let the first speaker carry it, lest
 “ a spirit or habit of disputing, although begun about
 “ trifles, should proceed to matters of more consequence ;
 “ like a spark among straw, which sometimes burns the
 “ house. Besides, people seldom dispute, be it about what
 “ it will, but little sallies of wit, tart expressions, inuendos,
 “ squinting at unpleasing topics, or the sly arts of seizing
 “ advantages in an argument, all of them irritating things,
 “ are wont to intrude, and too much enliven the conversa-
 “ tion. This is not rubbing, as it is softly called, but really
 “ brushing a part with nettles, which is already sensible
 “ enough, and perhaps a little disposed to inflammation.
 “ But if you should happen to differ about a matter of mo-
 “ ment, consider first, whether it is of moment equal to the
 “ love and peace you wish to live in ; and if, as I will ven-
 “ ture to pronounce it beforehand, it is not, that is the
 “ wisest and best person of the two, who, after a sweet and
 “ soothing use of one or two reasons, first seizes the oppor-
 “ tunity of sacrificing it to mutual love, by a free and
 “ cheerful surrender.” See Skelton’s Sermon on the Duties
 of the married State ; a Sermon which I strongly recom-
 mend to all those married persons, who have the means of
 seeing it. I take this opportunity of also recommending
 Mr. Bean’s [pious, sensible, and well-written little book,
 “ The Christian Minister’s Affectionate Advice to a new-
 “ married Couple.”

The obligation of mutual and lasting *love* is equally incumbent upon, equally *vowed* by both. Upon the husband it is most forcibly inculcated in a variety of passages of Scripture. “Husbands love your wives,” says St. Paul, “even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh¹.” The apostle here makes use of the most powerful arguments, and speaks of the marriage union as being represented by that most intimate connexion, which subsists between Christ and the church; the church deriving its spiritual life and nourishment, its very existence, from him its head, and having been purchased by the shedding of

¹ Ephes. v. 25—31.

his blood. But, lest those to whom he speaks should not be able to understand the full meaning of this comparison, which St. Paul himself calls a great mystery, he sums up the duty he had been inculcating in one short sentence, level to the capacity of every one. “Nevertheless,”—whether you fully comprehend this sublime mystery or not, still your duty is plain—“*nevertheless*, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself¹.” Every man knows how dearly he loves himself; how anxiously he avoids whatever may give him pain or uneasiness, how gladly he embraces whatever may contribute to his pleasure and satisfaction. Let this love which he bears to himself be the *lowest* measure of that which he bears to his wife, who is become in fact a part of himself. Let him be *at least equally* anxious not to give her pain, and to promote her happiness.

It was, probably, in order the more forcibly to represent the closeness of the union, which ought to subsist between man and wife, that God made choice of the mode which he adopted in the first formation of woman. Doubtless, he might have created her, as he created man, out of the dust of the ground; but instead of so creating her, he took her substance out of the man himself. “The

¹ Ephes. v. 33.

“Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon
“Adam, and he slept: and he took one of
“his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead
“thereof; and the rib which the Lord God
“had taken from man, made he a woman,
“and brought her unto the man. And Adam
“said, This is now bone of my bones, and
“flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Wo-
“man, because she was taken out of man.
“Therefore shall a man leave his father and
“his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife,
“and they shall be one flesh¹.” St. Paul, in
the passage which I quoted from his Epistle
to the Ephesians, plainly alludes to this first
formation of woman; and nothing can place
in a stronger point of view the close and in-
timate union which subsists between husband
and wife, and the duty of the former to love
the “latter as his own body.”

In the Epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul,
after charging husbands to love their wives,
adds, “and be not bitter against them;”
never be harsh, and rough, and ill-tempered
towards them, but always behave with gen-
tleness and kindness. Even if you think you
have reason to be displeased with any thing
in their conduct or manner, still do not
express your displeasure with bitterness or
violence, but with meekness and love; with
the same tenderness and forbearance, in

¹ Gen. ii. 21—24.

short, with which you would wish your own failings to be treated. Many little things had better be passed over entirely without notice; for if any one is extreme to mark every thing that is done amiss, no human being can abide it; so full are we all, even those who are most ready to see them in others, of manifold failings and imperfections. The illustration which St. Paul derives from the love of Christ to his church, may here again instruct us. Instead of being moved to bitterness and wrath by the imperfections and blemishes in his church, he gave himself to die, in order to purify and pardon it; and a husband ought to suffer any thing rather than behave towards "the wife of his bosom" with harshness. St. Peter, in his admonitions to husbands, adds, "giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered¹." This accordingly forms part of the marriage vow, in which the husband solemnly pledges himself to *honour* his wife, as well as to *love* and *keep* her. He is to *honour* her; to treat her always with attention and respect. She has a strong claim to this *honour*, as being the weaker. For a man to take advantage of her weakness, so as to refuse her the honour due to her, is *unmanly*

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 7.

and base. St. Peter gives, as a reason for this honour, the consideration, that husband and wife are “ heirs together of the grace of “ life.” They are equally objects for whom Christ died, are equally admitted to the hope of immortality.

The wife in like manner is bound by every consideration to love and honour her husband; and, in addition to love and honour, owes him the duty of *obedience*. To this she solemnly pledges herself in the expression of consent, and in the marriage vow, in which she promises to *obey* him; and you will observe, that in the several passages from the New Testament, which are brought together in the exhortation, *obedience* is the duty principally insisted on. “ Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto “ the Lord. For the husband is the head of “ the wife, even as Christ is the head of the “ church: and he is the Saviour of the body. “ Therefore as the church is subject unto “ Christ, so let the wives be to their own “ husbands in every thing¹.” And again he saith, “ Let the wife see that she reverence “ her husband².” And again, “ Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as “ it is fit in the Lord³.” You will observe, that St. Paul lays down the duty of obedience in the wife in the strongest and most

¹ Ephes. v. 22—24.

² Ephes. v. 33.

³ Col. iii. 18.

extensive manner. She is to be obedient in *every thing*—in every thing which is not contrary to the will of God; for, if the will of God and the will of the husband should unhappily interfere with each other, God in this, as in all other instances, must be obeyed rather than man. In all cases not contrary to the law of God, the duty of wives is clear; they *must obey in every thing*. You may think sometimes that your understanding, or your knowledge, or your skill in management, may be superior to your husband's; and this may often be really the case. Where it is, the husband will act wisely in leaving things in great measure to your management. But wherever he thinks fit to assert his authority, there, even if he should be inferior to you in any of the particulars above mentioned, your duty, as plainly set forth in Scripture, is to *obey* and to *submit* yourselves. I should here, however, just suggest to husbands, that the less they insist upon this right, the more willingly it will be paid; and that they should, generally speaking, seem rather to lead their wives by gentleness and love, than to control them by authority.

St. Peter inculcates the duty of obedience in a similar manner; “Ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of

“the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” Surely, there hardly can be a stronger argument to lead wives to dutiful subjection to their husbands, than the hope, that by their gentleness and submission they may win them over to real religion, to which they perhaps could not be brought by any other motives.

St. Peter, after cautioning all Christian wives against vanity and costliness in their apparel, goes on to exhort them to put on “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which,” says he, “is in the sight of God of great price;” and he then enforces his exhortation, by giving, as an example, the dutiful submission of Sarah to her husband. The value of a meek and quiet spirit is great in every relation of life, but in none is it greater than in the state of marriage. A woman cannot take a more effectual method of securing her husband’s fidelity and love, than by putting on this ornament of *a meek and quiet spirit*; while, on the other hand, any violence or hastiness of temper, any angry or peevish behaviour, will go far towards estranging him, and inspiring him with a dislike of her society. Wives should remember that the first woman was formed for the express purpose of being a *helpmate* to man. They should always bear this in

mind, and endeavour by all the means in their power to *help* their husbands in all things; to soothe them in their difficulties and vexations, to comfort them in their sorrows, and, as far as they can, to set forward the salvation of their souls, by gently winning them to the love and practice of genuine religion.

There is one part of the marriage vow, which I would gladly be excused from mentioning, but which I do not feel it right to pass over in silence; I mean that which provides for faithfulness to the marriage bed. Each party solemnly promises and vows to *keep only* unto its lawful partner, *so long as they both shall live*. The breach of this part of the vow—the crime of *adultery*—is one of the most deadly sins that can be committed. It is at once a criminal indulgence of carnal lust; a cruel injury to a person, who has a just right to expect nothing but what is kind and good; and at the same time a breach of a solemn vow contracted in God's house, at God's altar. Adultery consequently is one of those sins, which are repeatedly spoken of in Scripture as shutting the guilty person out of heaven, and assigning them to the dreadful portion of the devil and his angels, in the fire that never shall be quenched.

Finally, let me exhort you both to endeavour to advance yourselves and each other in the knowledge and practice of true religion.

In proportion as your union is governed by religion it is likely to be happy. You cannot show a stronger instance of love—you cannot do any thing more calculated to increase and strengthen that love—than the endeavour to assist your partner in the ways of holiness. Let this be the object of your cordial exertions, and of your fervent prayers.

In order to preserve the recollection of your duties always fresh and vivid in your minds, I should advise you often to read over the marriage service; it might be well if you made it a rule to do this every year on your wedding day; at the same time examining yourselves by it, and imploring God to forgive your failures. And never forget that you are bound to the observance of these duties by the sanction of a solemn and deliberate *vow*.

Every important alteration in a man's life should be regarded by him as a new call to godliness of living; and those who have made so important and great a change, as takes place when they enter into the holy state of matrimony, should derive from it fresh arguments and motives for giving themselves up to the service of God. The solemn circumstances attending the celebration of marriage should contribute to fix religious impressions upon you; and you should feel bound by strong additional ties to act

up to those impressions. In the relation which you have contracted, you have at once great additional cause for thankfulness to God, and also additional occasion for his favour and protection: *Seek, therefore, that favour and protection in earnest prayer, and by endeavouring, in reliance on Divine aid, to live in all things according to the will of God*¹. Employ yourselves much in religious meditation, and in reading the holy Scriptures, and pray, that “whatever in God’s word you shall profitably learn, you may indeed fulfil the same.” I conclude with the impressive benediction of the marriage service: May “Almighty God, who at the beginning did create our first parents Adam and Eve, and did sanctify and join them together in marriage, pour upon you, who have entered that holy state, the riches of his grace; may he sanctify and bless you, that ye may please him both in body and soul, and live together in holy love, unto your lives’ end.”

¹ New married persons should, in compliance with the direction in the Prayer Book, take an early—indeed *the earliest*—opportunity of receiving the Lord’s Supper. And I should exhort them to continue to be regular communicants at the holy table, as a means of improving in religion, and of assisting them in observing the solemn engagement which they have contracted by the marriage vow.

SERMON XXIX¹.

DUTY OF PARENTS.

EPHES. vi. 4.

“Ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

It is the observation of Solomon, that if you train up a child in the way wherein he should go, he will not depart from it when he is old; and a celebrated countryman of our own expresses his opinion, “that of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education².” Sometimes indeed even those who have been well brought up, disappoint the hopes of their friends; while others whose education has been neglected, are by the grace and good providence of God led into the paths of true religion. Generally speaking, however, the observation above

¹ This Sermon is also published as a Tract, price 3d.

² Locke.

quoted holds good ; it is generally true that men are made what they are by education. If they have been well brought up by sensible and pious parents, they are usually a comfort and joy to their friends, and an ornament to society ; and when they quit this world, they quit it with a well-grounded hope of future happiness through the merits of their Redeemer. If their education has been neglected, and they have been left to the influence of their own bad passions and appetites, and to that of an evil world, they generally become a reproach to their parents, and a nuisance to those among whom they dwell ; and are perhaps tempted to curse the hour in which they were born.

Such being my conviction of the importance of a right education, I am anxious to give what assistance I can to such parents, as have not as yet thought much upon this subject. I trust that you will attend seriously to what I say. Reflect, that your children—those little creatures which you now fondle in your arms, or see gaily playing about you—are all heirs of immortality. The *being*, which they have now received through you, will never end. They will—they *must*—live for ever either in happiness or in misery. They must be for ever either with the holy angels and saints of God in heaven, or the miserable companions of devils in hell. Can you think of this without being very

desirous to do what you can to work out their salvation? Reflect too that your children, amiable and pleasing as they now seem, yet inherit from you a nature prone to evil. They have come into the world with passions, and appetites, and desires, which, if not corrected, will certainly lead them to destruction. The great corrector and restrainer of the evil tendencies of their nature, is the preventing and assisting grace of God, for which you must earnestly and constantly pray. But then you must endeavour to work together with that grace, and do what you can yourselves to train them up in the way wherein they should go¹, —to “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord².” The meaning of these expressions is, that you should bring them up in the habitual practice of all the duties of the religion of Christ, and, as their understandings open, in the knowledge and belief of its doctrines.

But, while it is your wish to accustom them to have respect unto *all* God’s commandments without exception, there are some particular instances of duty which require your especial attention.

In the first place, bring them up in the habit of *obedience* to your authority. This is one of their leading obligations when they come to the use of their reason: “Children,

¹ Prov. xxii. 6.

² Eph. vi. 4.

“obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.” “Obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord¹.” Endeavour to accustom them to it from their earliest years. Even before they are able to speak, children show that they have a will of their own. We often see little creatures of two or three years old expecting every one in the family to do their pleasure; their parents, and brothers and sisters, partly from mistaken fondness, partly to avoid trouble, and partly for amusement, encourage them, perhaps, in their wilfulness. But by so doing they are laying up in store much future uneasiness for themselves, and for the objects of their indulgence. I do not wish parents to thwart the wishes of their children without cause, or needlessly to find fault with them. But, whenever there is good reason for it, they must assert their authority—kindly indeed—but firmly and steadily. Never suffer a child to obtain by crying any thing which you think improper for it. When it is very young, you may divert its attention from the forbidden object; if, after withholding it, you give way in consequence of the child’s noise and clamour, it gains a victory over you, which will be most mischievous in its consequences. You teach the child to think, that it can at any future time gain its object

¹ Ephes. vi. 1.² Col. iii. 20.

by crying, and strengthen its wilfulness and disposition to passion. As the child advances in understanding, you may accustom it to give up what it wishes for from a principle of obedience, even though the forbidden object may happen to continue in its sight. This will contribute to lay the foundation of that self-denial, which is so necessary through life.

Occasionally it may be necessary to support your authority by actual *punishment*. Punishment must be always painful to a parent, and you will employ it as seldom as possible. The necessity of it may be, in a great measure, prevented, by the steadiness and kindness of behaviour which I have been recommending. When it is *necessary*, you must not suffer a mistaken fondness to prevent you from inflicting it. Seasonable correction is an instance and token of love. “Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth¹.” Remember the observations of Solomon, “He that spareth his rod, hateth his son: but he that loveth him, chasteneth him betimes².” “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him³.” “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for

¹ Prov. iii. 12.

² Prov. xiii. 24.

³ Prov. xxii. 15.

“his crying¹.” “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell².” Reflect upon this last passage, which represents the efficacy of punishment, in delivering the soul from *hell*. And is it not worth while for a parent to give himself and his child some pain and uneasiness *now*, rather than run the hazard of its perishing everlastingly?

I do not consider these passages as prescribing any particular sort of punishment. The slighter the punishment the better, provided its end be answered. And, perhaps, generally speaking, almost any kind of punishment is better than *beating*. But, though moderate, it should be *certain*, if the offence for which it is threatened be committed. Be true to your word in every thing. If you tell a child that you will punish him, if he acts in such or such a manner, be sure to inflict what you threaten, if he persists in the forbidden line of conduct. Make always the greatest difference between inadvertence or accident, and wilful offence or obstinacy. Let the punishment be in proportion to the guilt of the child, rather than to the loss or pain which you suffer yourself. But, if you allow a foolish fondness for your children, an unwillingness to put them to present pain or

¹ Prov. xix. 18.

² Prov. xxiii. 14.

world, and, what is worse, spoilt for heaven. Some thoughtless parents are in the habit of saying, that their poor children are likely to have trials and hardships as they grow up, and therefore they give them their own way now. Such conduct proceeds from ignorance, and is, in reality, cruelty to their children under the pretence of kindness. It is contrary to the voice of reason and Scripture, which both require, that children should be restrained from following their own wills and humours, and that they should be punished when punishment is necessary.

But then never inflict punishment as if you took delight in it: never chasten them *for your own pleasure*, or by way of giving vent to your anger or vexation. "Correct not in anger," is an excellent maxim. If you are in a passion with your children, wait until you are cool before you punish them. When cool, you can correct them with judgment and moderation, which will not be the case when you are under the influence of passion. Never *scold*, or abuse them with reproachful language. Scolding never does good, but only serves to irritate, or injuriously to frighten them. To *swear* at them is dreadful. On the whole of this part of the subject keep in mind the admonition of St. Paul, "Fathers, provoke not your children to *anger*, lest they be discou-

"*raged*." Be careful not to *discourage* them by undue severity, or by harshness of manner. If you give way to violence of temper, and angrily beat or scold them, you will "*provoke them to anger*," will lessen their respect for you, and deaden their love.

Endeavour as much as possible to win your children to their duty by kindness and affection. Love to you is implanted in their nature. Do nothing that may needlessly weaken it. Our Lord observes, that if any man love him he will keep his word; and the assertion is applicable to the present case. The more your children love you, the more will they regard your instructions and admonition². Be kind and gentle to them in your look and manner. Comply in things indifferent with their wishes and inclinations; and contribute as far as you reasonably can to their pleasures and amusements.

Cultivate in them not only love to yourselves, but a general spirit of *kindness* and *good-will* to all within their reach. Teach them, very early, that it is their duty to love their fellow-creatures as themselves, and to do to every one as they would be done by. Lead them gently to examine themselves by this rule; and whenever, in word or deed, they break it, try in a kind way to make them sensible of their fault. Diligently labour to

¹ Col. iii. 21. and Ephes. vi. 4.

² Doddridge.

get the better of their disposition to *selfishness*. Selfishness is one of the most rooted evils of our nature. Teach them, when they see another, especially a brother or sister, enjoying any pleasure, to be as glad as if they enjoyed it themselves, and on no account to be jealous or envious. Accustom them readily to give up to each other, to sacrifice their own wills and wishes, to take a pleasure in doing good-natured and obliging actions.

You must bring them up to be *kind*, not only towards man, but also to *brutes*. Little children, from mere thoughtlessness, often put such animals as fall into their power to great and unnecessary pain. Never suffer them in pure wantonness to beat a horse, or dog, or any other animal. Never permit them for mere amusement to rob a poor bird of its young, or to torment and teaze any living creature. To see a child for its sport hunting domestic fowls, or piercing an insect in order to make it whirl on a string, is painful to every feeling mind.

Be particularly careful to bring them up with a sacred regard for *truth*. This habit is of the utmost consequence to their happiness both in this world and the next. Children when not properly instructed are very apt to be regardless of truth. When any blame has been incurred, they often try to throw it from themselves on some other person; to defend themselves by false excuses;

or perhaps to invent charges against those, whom they wish to put in the wrong. In short, even from their earliest years, they are by nature too ready to "go astray, and "speak lies." Even when their wishes or their interests are not concerned, they frequently make little distinction between truth and falsehood, and relate events, or give them their colouring with little attention to accuracy.

Try very anxiously to put a stop to these bad habits. Teach them the hateful nature of falsehood in the sight both of God and man. When you think that they have done any thing wrong, or occasioned to you any loss or damage by carelessness, take care lest by the violence or severity of your manner you frighten them into a lie. By all means encourage a frank and open confession, and let such confession generally save them from punishment; though if they have acted wrong, you must try to make them sensible of it in a serious though kind manner. In all your intercourse with your children, show a scrupulous regard to truth yourselves. Never deceive them at any time, even in their earliest youth. Always be as good as your word either in promises or threatenings. Do not allow either yourselves or your children to tell falsehoods in joke. A disregard for truth in matters of jest, is apt to lead to a disregard for it in things of consequence.

Teach them to be *humble*. Pride was not made for man; and it is from pride and self-conceit that many of the crimes, and much of the misery, that prevail in the world, have their origin. The advice of St. Peter is, "all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." Endeavour to make your children enter into the spirit of this Scriptural exhortation: make them understand, that pride is the parent of ill-humour and quarrelling, and too often of malice and hatred; and that true honour, peace, and comfort, spring from humility.

Connected with this part of the subject is vanity of person or dress. Your children should be as clean and neat, as your circumstances will permit; but check from the beginning every disposition to *finery*. The foolish vanity of mothers sometimes tempts them to indulge their children in a taste for dress, beyond what their situation in life requires, or their means allow. Such a taste is natural in children, and if encouraged instead of being checked, will grow up with them, and foster a silly levity of mind, and too probably betray them into dangerous and deadly sin.

As soon as their minds are at all able to

1 Pet. v. 5.

receive it, endeavour gently and gradually to instil into them the knowledge of the truths of religion. This appears to be particularly meant by the exhortation to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." When very young, they may be made to understand that they are at all times in the presence of God, that he sees every thing that they do, and hears every word that they speak; and that he is displeased whenever they use any bad words, or do any bad actions. When a little older, you may accustom them always to bear in mind the recollection of the great account which they must one day give before the judgment seat of Christ, and of the never-ending state either of happiness or of misery in which that judgment will place them. You will often remind them of the proneness to evil which they brought into the world, and of their many actual transgressions; they will thus be prepared to understand their want of a Redeemer and a Sanctifier. This will lead you to explain to them the method of man's redemption by Christ, and the means by which they may obtain the help of the Holy Ghost.

Bring them early into the habit of *praying* to God every night and morning. Never rest satisfied with the repetition of the words of a prayer, but strive to make them enter into the meaning of what they are saying, so

that their hearts and thoughts may really accompany their lips.

Often hear them repeat parts of the Church Catechism yourselves. Try whether they understand it; explain to them its meaning; and carry it into their daily and hourly practice. For instance, are they guilty of falsehood? Remind them that lying is one of the works of the devil, which at their baptism they engaged to renounce. Do they swear, or take God's name in vain? Tell them that God will not hold guiltless, but will surely punish, those who thus break the third Commandment. And in like manner remind them of all other parts of their duty as occasions occur. These things you must with kindness and seriousness impress upon your children over and over again, as they are able to attend to them. There must be line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. It is a care which you must never give over. You know the direction of the Hebrew lawgiver; "These words, "which I command thee this day, shall be in "thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of "them when thou sittest in thine house, and "when thou walkest by the way, and when "thou liest down, and when thou risest up¹." You are to take every opportunity of im-

¹ Deut. vi. 6, 7.

pressing upon your children religious truths. In particular you must employ in their instruction much of those parts of the Lord's day which are not devoted to public worship. Surely it is better to employ the rest of the sabbath in this manner, than in careless talk, in noisy pastimes, or in listless indolence.

Much assistance in acquiring and preserving the knowledge of religion may be obtained from being able to *read*. Most parents are properly anxious to give this advantage to their children ; but are sometimes not sufficiently careful in making the most of the opportunities in their power. When your children are put to school, take care that they are regular and constant in their attendance. By frequently absenting themselves, they break into the good order of the school, and hinder their own progress.

When they are taken from school in order to their earning something towards their maintenance, they should make a point of keeping up at home what they have learnt, if not of adding to it. I have often been grieved to find how soon boys, who when at school could read correctly and readily, forget what they have learnt, so as hardly to be able to get through two lines together without hesitation. This evil would be prevented, if their parents would accustom them to read aloud for five or ten minutes every evening after the labours of the day are over. Sunday

schools may be particularly useful, in keeping up the reading of those, who go to work during the week. It is indeed to young people of this age that they are of most use, and their parents should gladly take advantage of them. It is very desirable that you should prevail on them frequently to learn by heart a verse or two of Scripture. For this purpose you should choose such passages as relate to the leading doctrines of the Gospel, or to those duties and those temptations, of which from their situation in life they particularly need to be reminded¹.

Lastly, try to keep your children from all bad company; and above all set them a good example yourselves. Children are naturally prone to imitation, and are more influenced by what they see than by what they hear. You can hardly expect them to mind you, when you exhort them to keep the laws of God, if you habitually break those laws yourselves. Let them never see you give way to excessive anger or violence of temper. Let them never see you overcome by liquor. Let them never hear you curse or swear, or in any other way speaking unadvisedly with your lips. It has been well and strongly said, "to give children good instruction and a bad example, is but beckoning them with the head to show them the way to heaven,

¹ See the selection of texts at the end of this Sermon.

“while we take them by the hand and lead them in the way to hell.” To your other cares for your children you must add fervent prayer for them to Almighty God. Without his blessing all your labour will be in vain. You must implore him to send down upon your children the constant influences of his Spirit to assist them in getting the better of their corruptions, and in going on from strength to strength in the paths of virtue and holiness.

The religious education of your children will require from you considerable pains and unceasing attention. Such pains and attention you will think well bestowed when you reflect, that the happiness of your children both in this life and the next is at stake. Think what you would feel, if in consequence of your neglect your children, should grow up to be a reproach to you, and a curse to themselves; still more think what you would feel, if at the day of judgment you should hear pronounced upon them the sad sentence of “Depart ye cursed,” and should be then sensible that they might have avoided it, had not you neglected their education when young.

If, on the other hand, you so train them up in the way wherein they should go, so fix in their minds good principles and good habits, that through divine grace they never depart from them as they grow old, great indeed

will be your reward : you will look forward with humble hope to their being your crown of rejoicing at the last day. United with them in humble reliance on the merits of your Redeemer, you will meekly stand before his throne, and say, " Behold, I and the children which God hath given me . "

¹ Isaiah viii. 18. Heb. ii. 13.

Note. I strongly recommend to such parents as can procure them, the Essay on Education, by Mrs. Trimmer, (a name not to be mentioned by the friend of children, and of the poor, but with respect and gratitude ;) and those excellent little books, " A Practical View of Christian Education," and " Hints for the improvement of Early Education and Nursery Discipline."

I subjoin references to a few passages of Scripture to be learnt by heart by children, and explained to, and impressed upon them, by their parents. The number may easily be enlarged.

God the maker and preserver of all things, and every where present. Acts xvii. 24—28. Psalm xxxiii. 6. Heb. xi. 3. Matt. vi. 26—30. Psalm viii. Psalm cxxxix.

Redemption through Christ. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. Eph. v. 2. Rom. v. 6. 8. 1 Pet. iii. 18. 2 Cor. v. 21. Isa. liii.

Necessity of divine grace, and means of procuring it. 2 Cor. iii. 5. Phil. ii. 13. James i. 5. Luke xi. 9. 13.

Resurrection and future judgment. Acts xxiv. 15. Rev. xx. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. Acts xvii. 31. 2 Cor. v. 10. John v. 28, 29. Matt. xxiv. 36.

Christian practice, &c. Mark x. 13—16. Eph. iv. 20—32. Eph. vi. 1—3. Col. iii. 1—4, and 8—10, and 12—17. Gal. v. 14, and 22—26. Titus ii. 11—14, and iii. 1—7. Heb. xii. 5—11. Rom. xii. 1—3, and 9—11. Rom. xiii. Rom. vi. 1 Cor. xiii. 1 Pet. ii. 20—25. 1 Pet. iii. 8—18. 2 Pet. i. 5—8. Psalm i. xv. xix. xxiii. xxiv. xxvi. xxxii. xxxiv. xxxvii. xlii. xlv. li. xc. ci. ciii. civ. cvii. cxix.

SERMON XXX.

DUTY OF CHILDREN.

EPHES. vi. 1, 2.

Children, obey your ~~parents~~ in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother: which is the first commandment with promise.

ONE of the earliest duties which man is called upon to perform after he comes into the world, is the duty which he owes to his *parents*,—to those who, under Providence, have been the authors of his being, the occasion of his coming into life. And as this is one of the first duties in point of time, so is it also one of the first in point of dignity and importance. In the Ten Commandments it stands at the head of the laws of the second table, and is spoken of by St. Paul in the text as being the first commandment with promise.

It will, I think, generally be found, that in proportion as the duty to parents is attended to, most other duties also will be

diligently observed; and that where this is neglected, the neglect is accompanied by a disregard of most other parts of moral obligation. In other words, those who have grown up in habits of *love, respect, and obedience* to their parents, generally turn out good neighbours, good subjects, and, humanly speaking, good men. On the other hand, those who have been *disobedient to parents*, and without the proper natural affection towards them, are too often to be ranked with the worst of characters, with those who are haters of God, and are filled with all unrighteousness and wickedness.

The word, by which the duty to parents is expressed, both in the Ten Commandments and in the text, is *honour*; "Honour thy father and thy mother." Under this general term we are required to *love, honour, and succour* them; to fulfil, in short, all those instances of duty, which from the word of God, and from the nature of the relation which subsists between them, we find to be due from children to their parents.

In the first place, children are to *love* their parents. This we are taught by the very frame and constitution of our being, which naturally disposes, not only men, but, for a time, most of the dumb animals also, to love those who have given them birth. And there is great reason why it should be so. For, not to dwell upon the consideration,

that it is to your parents that, under Providence, you are indebted for your being, if you reflect upon the numberless benefits which each of you has received from them, and the many anxieties which they have undergone for your sake ; if you consider how they watched over you with unwearied attention during the helplessness of infancy, how they supplied you with food and raiment and ministered to all your wants, how they denied themselves many innocent gratifications, perhaps deprived themselves occasionally even of food, that their children might have enough ;—if you lay these things to heart you surely must acknowledge, that every feeling and expression of love which you can possibly show is little enough in return for such unceasing kindness.

Where this love really exists it will go a great way towards ensuring the fulfilment of all the other duties which children owe to their parents. It will, for instance, tend to render them *obedient*, and to make their obedience willing and cheerful, instead of being constrained and sullen. *Obedience* to parents is strongly inculcated in the holy Scriptures. Not only does the fifth Commandment enjoin you to honour your father and mother, of which honour obedience is a principal part,—but St. Paul says expressly in the text, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right ;” and again to the

Colossians, "Children obey your parents in "all things : for this is well-pleasing unto the "Lord." Every one must immediately see that this duty is founded upon the strongest and clearest reason. Children for many years are altogether incapable of governing themselves in the slightest degree; even when they grow older, and their reason begins to unfold itself, they still, if left to themselves, would be led almost entirely by their own appetites, and passions, and fancies, and it is absolutely necessary that they should be guided and controlled by wiser heads than their own. Their parents not only have more experience in the world, but must be supposed to have their children's welfare at heart, and to be guided by a view to their best interest, when they check and control them by that authority with which God has invested them. Happy would it be for the children, happy for the parents, and happy for the world at large, if this authority were more frequently and steadily exercised. Children naturally like to have their own way; and many parents, either from a mistaken fondness, or in order to save themselves trouble, suffer them to do as they like, to walk after the desires of their hearts and the sight of their own eyes. The consequence too often is, that the children grow up to be the grief and reproach of their parents, a

misery to themselves, and the pests of society.

My object now, however, is to enforce the duty of obedience upon children. "You are to obey," St. Paul says, "in all things;"—in all things, that is, which are allowed by the laws of God, or the laws of the land. If, indeed, a parent should unhappily bid a child do any thing plainly and decidedly contrary to the divine law, here God must be obeyed rather than man. And if, when the reason of a young person is considerably matured, a parent should enjoin any thing, which would in the opinion of judicious persons be likely to render life unhappy, a respectful refusal may be lawful. Generally speaking, however, obedience to parents is the clear and positive duty of their offspring, not only until the age of twenty-one years, when the laws of their country allow them to act for themselves, but, to a certain degree, as long as they live. The punishment of disobedient children under the Mosaic law—which, you will remember, proceeded from God himself—was most dreadful. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him

“out unto the elders of his city, and unto
“the gate of his place; And they shall say
“unto the elders of his city, This our son is
“stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey
“our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.
“And all the men of his city shall stone him
“with stones, that he die¹.” In the same
book it is said, “Cursed be he that setteth
“light by his father or his mother. And all
“the people shall say, Amen².”

Whatever alteration maturity of years and understanding may make in some cases with regard to *obedience*, it makes none in the *respect* and *reverence* which are due to parents as long as they live. Indeed it seems not impossible that some feelings of this nature may find place even after this life is over. In a future state, indeed, all human distinctions will have ceased, and the spirits of the just made perfect “neither marry nor
“are given in marriage;” but it seems to me that a filial feeling of respect may even then continue, and add to the happiness of both children and parents, who meet in the realms of bliss.

Most earnestly do I exhort all who have parents, to treat them always with the utmost deference and respect, and to nourish in their bosoms an habitual feeling of filial reverence. Never allow yourselves to be-

¹ Deut. xxi. 18.

² Deut. xxvii. 16.

have towards them, or to speak to them, in a slighting or disrespectful manner. Parents should for their children's sake, if not for their own, immediately check any approach to behaviour of this nature; but even if they weakly permit it, let not children so take advantage of their indulgence, as to lose the feeling of honour and respect. This feeling will induce you to listen to their admonitions and advice with attention, and to receive their reproofs with meekness. If they should be led into any hastiness of speech, any warmth or intemperance of language, you must bear with them, not answering again, or not answering but with submission and respect. If your parents have their failings and imperfections, whether arising from the infirmities of age or from natural character, you should be very backward to observe them; and if you cannot help seeing them, must conceal them carefully from the eyes of the world. Bad indeed must be the heart, and most depraved both the feelings and the understanding of that man, who can be guilty of exposing to others the weaknesses of a parent, or of treating them as a matter of jest or ridicule. "Glory not in the dishonour of thy father; for thy father's dishonour is no glory unto thee¹." Most men who are governed by the common feelings

¹ Ecclus. iii. 10.

of nature, agree in looking upon such behaviour with abhorrence and disgust; and it appears to fall under the awful censure expressed in the book of Proverbs, “The eye
“that mocketh his father, and despiseth to
“obey his mother, the ravens of the valley
“shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall
“eat it¹.”

Another important part of the duty to parents is that of affording them *relief* and *support* if they are reduced to want it. This is comprehended in the term *honour*; for thus our Saviour explains the word in his reproof of the Pharisees for making this commandment of none effect through their tradition; “God commanded,” says he, “Honour thy father and mother;—but ye say, “Whosoever shall say to his father or his
“mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever thou
“mightest be profited by me;”—that is, what should have relieved you, I have devoted to religious purposes;—whosoever shall say thus, “and honour not his father
“or his mother, he shall be free².” Or, as it is in St. Mark, “Ye suffer him no more to
“do ought for his father or his mother³.” In several other passages of Scripture the term honour appears to bear the same meaning.

The laws of this country require those who

¹ Prov. xxx. 17. ² Matt. xv. 4, 5, 6. ³ Mark vii. 12.

are able, to provide subsistence for their parents when reduced to poverty, and the voice of nature and of God speaks the same language. As parents supplied the wants of their children during the helplessness of infancy, so their children, in return, should minister to their necessities during the feebleness and infirmities of old age. Their feelings of love, and gratitude, and respect, forbid them to leave a father or a mother exposed to distress, if they can remove it. They should exert themselves to procure comforts for their parents, and never allow them to become a burden to others if they are able to prevent it. St. Paul directs that both “children and nephews,”—(which word should here be rendered grandchildren)—should “learn first to show piety at home, “and to requite their parents¹;—*to requite them*, to repay them that care, and attention, and maintenance, which they received in their childhood.

In short, children are called upon to *succour* their parents, to *comfort* and *assist* them, in whatever manner they are able, and to do all that they can to contribute to the ease and happiness of their declining years. The common feelings of humanity enforce these lessons. Corrupted as our nature is, yet still those who are regardless of the wants

¹ 1 Tim. v. 4.

and distresses of their parents, are justly blamed and reproached by all around them. The voice of nature seems to speak the language of the son of Sirach; "My son, help thy father in his age, and grieve him not as long as he liveth. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him; and despise him not when thou art in thy full strength¹." "He that feareth the Lord will honour his father, and will do service unto his parents, as to his masters²." And a few verses after, "He that forsaketh his father is a blasphemer; and he that angereth his mother is cursed of God³."

In the Scriptures we have several awful instances of disobedient children; and, on the other hand, some beautiful examples of dutifulness and filial love. The affection which Joseph showed to his aged parent, when he wished to nourish him in his declining years, and the respect with which he treated him, are familiar, I trust, to most of you. Of Solomon we read, when his mother came to speak unto him, that "the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand⁴." Our blessed Lord, "who gave us an example that we

¹ Eccclus. iii. 12, 13.

² Eccclus. iii. 7.

³ Eccclus. iii. 16.

⁴ 1 Kings ii. 19.

“should follow his steps,” was dutifully subject unto his parents¹; and almost the last words that he spoke when expiring on the cross, were those in which he recommended his mother (whose soul, according to the prophecy of the aged Simeon, was now pierced through with the sword of anguish²) to the care of his beloved disciple.

Let these examples, together with the express precepts of the Scripture and the voice of nature itself, induce you to be *affectionate*, and *dutiful*, and *obedient* to your parents. Remember the awful judgments denounced in the word of God against undutiful children. Remember that St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, classes those who are without natural affection and disobedient to parents, together with men who are haters of God, and full of murder, deceit, and malignity³. And in the Second Epistle to Timothy, he speaks of *disobedience to parents*, as being one of the signs of the perilous times which should come in the last days, when men should be proud, blasphemous, without natural affection, and despisers of those that are good⁴. God grant that we may not be called to see such unhappy signs of the times!

If in time past any of you have been un-

¹ Luke ii. 51.

² Rom. i. 29, 30.

³ Luke ii. 35.

⁴ 2 Tim. iii. 2, 3.

mindful of the duty which you owe to your parents, confess your sinfulness to God with shame and confusion of face. There are, perhaps, few kinds of sin, which, when the heart is rightly affected, will occasion deeper shame or more sincere contrition. Implore the forgiveness of God, through the merits and atonement of his Son; and if you still have opportunity, endeavour to make amends to your parents for your past transgressions by redoubled attention and affection. Comply as far as you possibly can with all their wishes; receive their admonitions with respect; kindly minister to their wants; and bear patiently with their failings and infirmities. In earnest prayer seek the aid of the Holy Spirit to enable you to fulfil these duties as you ought to fulfil them; and ever bear in mind, that the best feelings of nature, the common judgment of mankind, and the express and solemn precepts of the word of God, all concur in requiring you to *love, honour, and succour your father and mother.*

The Child's Prayer for Parents.

(From Jenks.)

O Lord, my *heavenly* Father, I humbly beg thy blessing, grace, and mercy upon my parents. Cast them not away in the time of old age, forsake them not when their strength faileth them; but have compassion on their infirmities,

and help them in all their weakness. O remember not against them any of their former iniquities ; but according to thy mercy remember them for thy goodness sake in Christ Jesus. Grant that true wisdom may ever be with them ; that their hoary heads may be found in the way of righteousness, and their souls be ever precious in thy sight. Let goodness and mercy follow them all the days of their life ; and the longer they live in this world, make them still the readier to die, and the fitter to live with thee in life eternal. Be thou their guide until death ; in death their support and comfort : and when all on earth shall fail them, be thou the strength of their hearts and their portion for ever, through Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXXI.

DUTY OF MASTERS.

COL. iv. 1.

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”

THE distinction of the several ranks in society, by which some men have a certain degree of pre-eminence and authority over others, appears to be founded in the original constitution of nature, and must have existed almost from the beginning of the world. As such, it is not set aside, but rather confirmed and strengthened by the Christian religion. The authority of masters over servants in particular, is, by that religion, expressly established for the mutual convenience and advantage of both.

But, though invested with this authority, masters are never to forget that the distinction between them and their servants is but for a short time, and that in every thing

essential they are equals; the work of the *same* Creator, children of the *same* forefather, purchased by the *same* Redeemer, and heirs of the *same* immortality with themselves. If tempted to look down upon their servants with any feeling of insolence and pride, they should say with Job, “Did not he that made me in the womb make them? and did not one fashion us in the womb¹?” Or they may check the unchristian emotion, by looking forward to that place where all human distinctions will cease, where they shall equally moulder into dust:—that place of which it is said, “the small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master².”

The great principle from which, in this and in every thing else, our conduct ought to proceed, is *love*;—that love which induces a man to look upon every one as a brother, to love his neighbour as himself;—and the great rule by which in this and every other relation between man and man, our conduct ought to be regulated, is, to do to others as we would *in reason* wish others to do unto us. A master, for instance, should in supposition, put himself in his servant's place, and consider,—not what he might *unreasonably* wish for,—not what the spirit of ill-humour, or idleness, or self-in-

¹ Job xxxi. 15.² Job iii. 19.

dulgence, might lead him to desire,—but what *in reason* and *fairness* he would have a right to expect; and let him take care that he behaves to his servant as he would himself *reasonably* wish to be treated in the same situation. Let him require from his servant nothing, which, if in his place, he would himself think unreasonable; and let him never be guilty towards him of language or behaviour, of which, in such circumstances, he would feel that he had a *right* to complain.

I would here observe by the way, that, under the general term *servant*, I would comprehend all those, who, for whatever length of time, whether for a day, for a week, or for a year, and for whatever consideration, whether wages or maintenance, or instruction, are engaged to work for another person.

Influenced by the principle of looking upon every man as a brother, of doing as he would be done by, a master will of course take care to comply with the precept in the text, and give unto his “servants that which “is just and equal.” It is not necessary to point out the precise difference between the two terms of *just* and *equal*; perhaps none was intended by the Apostle. If any *was* intended,—under the term *just*, we may understand whatever is due to a servant in strict justice, by the terms of his hiring, or the acknowledged laws of the country; and

under the expression *that which is equal*, we should understand whatever he has a right to expect in fairness and equity, though not the subject of an express agreement.

Under the first term—that which is *just*—will be included the payment of wages *when they become due*;—provided, that is, that the servant is anxious so to receive them; for if a servant or labourer is willing that payment should be delayed, it is evident that no injury is done to him by the delay. When, however, a servant is anxious to receive the money due to him, and it still is withheld, especially where it is withheld for a long time, the precept in Deuteronomy should be remembered; “Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy:—At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee¹.” The denunciation in Jeremiah also should be called to mind, “Woe unto him—that useth his neighbour’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work².” “Behold,” says St. James, “the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are

¹ Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. ² Jer. xxii. 13.

“entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”¹ And for the same reason, where sufficient maintenance was part of the agreement, the precept in the text requires the master to provide his servant with a sufficiency of food, however plain and simple; such as in the like situation he would himself think he had reason to expect.

Indeed, in every part of his conduct, he will make the real good, and the reasonable comfort of his servants the objects of his attention and care. Though he ought not to give way to their unreasonable fancies or desires,—though he will not encourage or indulge them in idleness, which would be hurtful to them as well as to himself,—yet neither will he require from them more work than they are well able to perform, and will take care that he does not render their state painful and galling to them by unnecessary harshness of behaviour. Some persons, from a defect of temper, which has not been corrected or subdued, either by their own exertions, or by the grace of God, are in the habit of constantly finding fault with their servants, and of never appearing satisfied. A very little reflexion upon what they would themselves feel would tell them how irksome and wearing this must be to those who are the objects of

¹ James v. 4.

their impatient humour. A very little reflexion would make them feel ashamed of thus giving way to a hastiness of manner, which gives pain not only to their servants, but to all who witness it.

There are also, I am afraid, some men in the world, who are fond, as they express themselves, of showing their authority; men, who enforce their orders to their servants with violence and threatening, and seldom find fault with or reprimand them without menaces and abuse; who oftentimes employ oaths and imprecations. Indeed, in every way, like the Egyptian taskmasters of old, they seem to exult in making their servants "serve with rigour." Such conduct, as it generally proceeds either from a violent overbearing temper, or from mere littleness of mind, so it answers but ill, even in a worldly point of view, as it has a tendency to make those who are guilty of it secretly disliked and *despised*. It is most decidedly contrary to the profession of a Christian; for St. Paul expressly enjoins masters to *forbear threatening*¹. They may, and they ought, to be firm and steady with their servants; they may enforce obedience to their lawful commands, and, where their servants are in fault, may admonish, may rebuke them, or, if necessary, may punish them as the law

¹ Eph. vi. 9.

allows ; but always with calmness and moderation, like one who bears towards them no ill-will, like as a father would reprimand or punish his children.

And, while a master, who is desirous of acting suitably to his Christian profession, is anxious to the utmost of his power to promote the temporal comfort and temporal welfare of his servants, he will be still more anxious to set forward their eternal welfare. In his own conduct he will endeavour to give them an example of all Christian virtues ; and will never suffer them to sin against God without admonition or reproof, —unless, when he has strong reason to fear that such admonition or reproof would be ineffectual, and thrown away upon them. If they are ignorant, and destitute of religious knowledge, as is too often the case, he will, as he judges most expedient, either instruct them himself by word of mouth, or take care that they are properly instructed by others, or lend them useful books by which they may instruct themselves. He will, if the circumstances of his family permit it, regularly call them to join in family prayer to God ; and on the Lord's day especially, will not only take care to allow them as large a part of it as possible for reading and religious exercises, but will also require them to be present regularly at the public worship of God, and to pay due attention to the instructions

of the minister. This attention to family religion is recommended in Scripture both by precept and example. “I know him,” says the Almighty of Abraham, “that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment¹.” The noble resolution of Joshua is well known, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord².”

Such are the duties—I ought, perhaps, rather to say, *some of the duties*—which masters owe to their servants. The performance of them may be enforced by a variety of motives. Such performance would tend not a little to advance the peace and comfort of families, and masters would find their own worldly interests and the care and quiet of their lives greatly promoted by it. It is enforced, however, still more strongly by the principles of our holy religion.

Allow me to repeat the consideration, which I mentioned at the beginning of this discourse. In all cases we should *do as we would be done by*. Put yourselves in the place of your servants: suppose that by change of circumstances you were actually to be reduced to their state, and think what you would then have a *right* to expect. Think how you would endure to be treated with violence or

¹ Gen. xviii. 19.

² Joshua xxiv. 15.

contempt—to be assailed with threatening, and curses, and imprecations. If you feel, as you surely must feel, that it would render your situation in life doubly irksome and galling, be not guilty of such behaviour towards your servants.

Consider too, that an humble and low rank in life has been ennobled by being borne by the Saviour of the world. *He took upon him the form of a servant, he performed the humblest offices, and came not to be ministered unto as a master, but to minister as a servant.* Let this consideration incline you to regard such a situation in life with respect. Reflect also that the meanest servant has as great an interest in the death and mediation of Christ, as the highest monarch; that he is equally invited to partake of divine grace, is equally admissible to the highest glories in heaven; and will there be exalted above you, if he is more holy than you. Take heed, therefore, that you despise not your poor brother, for whom Christ died, because his rank is low, because his condition in life is that of a servant.

The great argument, of which St. Paul makes use to enforce upon masters the performance of the duties incumbent upon them, is the consideration that they have also a master whose eye is upon them, and who is able to call them to account. Thus, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says, “Ye mas-

"ters do the same things unto them"—do your duty to your servants as punctually and exactly as I have required them to perform their duty to you—"forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him¹." And so again in the text, nearly in the same words, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." *Ye have a Master in heaven*, who is no respecter of persons, who considers all men as equal, and as distinguished from each other only by greater or less progress in holiness and religion. The difference of ranks and stations is indeed of his appointment, but this difference is merely for a short time. Those who are invested with any degree of authority or power over others, instead of being lifted up by it, or tempted to pride or arrogance, should draw from it matters of humiliation and fear. They should regard such authority or power as a talent, for the use or abuse of which they will be called to a solemn account; and should remember, that in proportion as more was committed to them, so will more be required. This consideration duly impressed upon the conscience, and kept always present to the mind, would, through Divine grace, go far

¹ Eph. vi. 9.

towards enforcing the performance of your duty in this, and all the other relations of life. *You have a Master in heaven; a Master who will one day take account, and a strict account¹, of you and all his other servants. Let the thoughts of this induce you always to give unto your servants "that which is just and equal;"—that which is just—that to which, by their agreement with you, or by the laws of the country, they are justly entitled;—and that which is equal, that which, though not due by positive agreement, they have yet a right to expect in fairness and equity. Let this consideration restrain you from all intemperate violence of behaviour or of language towards them;—above all, from enforcing your commands by oaths and curses. Let it make you anxious to render them as comfortable as the nature of your service will permit. Let it, in short, induce you to seek to advance their happiness in this life, and to set forward the salvation of their souls in the life to come.*

THE MASTER'S PRAYER.

O God, whose providence disposes the several ranks and conditions of men in this world, assist me in fulfilling all the duties which belong to my station. Enable me to walk in my house with an upright heart. Make me kind to my servants, and always ready to give unto them that

¹ Matt. xviii. 23.

which is just and equal, knowing that I also have a Master in heaven. Make my servants truly to fear thee, and to be governed by thy holy laws in their behaviour both to me and to each other. Enable us all faithfully to serve thee, and to walk in the paths of truth and holiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXXII.¹

DUTY OF SERVANTS.

COLOS. iii. 22.

“ Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”

As the ordinary business of the world is carried on by the aid of the many various classes and conditions of men, so, each of the persons, of whom these several classes consist, is called upon by the precepts of religion to *do his duty* in that particular state, in which the providence of God has placed him. One of the most numerous of these classes, consists of those, who have agreed to give their time and their labour for a certain price—for stipulated wages—thus contracting the relation of *servants*. Servants are placed in a situation of great usefulness, which has peculiar duties belonging to it, upon the observance of which, much of their own comfort and respectability, much too of the peace and

¹ This Sermon is also published as a Tract, price 3d.

well-being of society in general, is found to depend.

In the plain advice which I wish to offer to those who are servants, I shall endeavour shortly to state, first, the duties which they owe to their masters; secondly, the behaviour which they ought to observe towards their fellow-servants; and, lastly, the duties which they owe more immediately to God.

The two first of these heads of duty would be sufficiently provided for, by your observance of the great fundamental rule, of doing as you would be done by. If a servant, for instance, would put himself in his master's place, and honestly ask himself what he would then have a fair right to expect, but little farther direction would be necessary to guide him in the performance of his duty. Still it may be useful to dwell upon this relation of life more particularly; in doing which I shall endeavour to keep close to the exhortations of Scripture.

One of the principal duties of servants is obedience. St. Paul requires Titus (and through him the ministers of the Gospel in after ages) to "exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things¹." In the Epistle to the Ephesians he says, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters accord-

¹ Tit. ii. 9.

“ing to the flesh¹?” and again, writing to the Colossians, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh².” These precepts, you will observe, are very extensive; “obey in *all* things:” but still they are to be understood, as in similar cases, with some limitations. If, for instance, a master should order his servant to do any thing contrary to the laws of God, the servant is certainly bound to obey God rather than man. Or, if the master should require any thing contrary to the laws of the land, here again the servant not only may, but ought to disobey him. Again, if the master should order any thing clearly and decidedly contrary to the original agreement between them, to the acknowledged rules and customs by which that relation is governed, or to common justice, here also, it should seem, the servant may lawfully hesitate. In such cases, however, he should be ready to suspect his own judgment, and backward in asserting what may be his right. In matters of small consequence, especially, he will, both as a prudent and as a religious man, bear with many things, rather than resist his master’s authority. In all doubtful cases, *obedience* is the safe course, the course prescribed by Christian simplicity and meekness. Generally speaking, his duty is clear, and he is bound

¹ Ephes. vi. 5.² Col. iii. 22.

implicitly to obey his master, in virtue of that allegiance which he owes to his Saviour. "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters,"—says St. Paul, "as unto Christ¹."

And this obedience you are to pay, not in a sullen and constrained manner, as if you repined at your lot, and grudged your master every service you do for him, but *willingly and cheerfully*. It is natural for a good man to take pleasure in doing his duty, since he feels, that whatever may be his treatment from man, he is doing what he can to please God. You ought to take pleasure in doing *yours*. "Doing the will of God," as the apostle speaks, "from the heart:—with *good will* doing service as to the Lord, and not to men²." And again, "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ³." And this dutiful obedience, you will observe, you are bound to pay, whatever your master's personal character, or whatever his behaviour to you, may be. If he is hard to please, and in appearance never satisfied; if he is rash and rough in his demeanour towards you, and his language expressive of sourness and ill-temper rather than of good

¹ Ephes. vi. 5.² Ephes. vi. 6, 7.³ Col. iii. 23, 24.

will; you still must never treat him with disrespect, or neglect his service. In cases where the law allows it, you may seek indeed another place; but as long as you continue in his service, you are bound, by the duty which you owe to God, to obey your master diligently and respectfully. Such is the injunction of the apostle; “Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward,”—*the froward*, those who are harsh and rough in their manner;—“for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully¹.”

You should attend particularly to another feature in the character of a Christian servant, which consists in *not answering again*. There are, I believe, many servants, who need to be reminded of the Scriptural direction, *not to answer again*; servants, I mean, who make a point of disputing with their employers the propriety of almost every command or direction; and who, if their masters speak to them in the language of reproof or of anger, seem to think that to retort upon them, and to answer them again with ill language and abuse, is a mark of spirit and independence of mind. It is incumbent upon all Christians, if they meet with rough

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 18, 19.

and improper language, even from their equals, to bear with it in the spirit of meekness; but this is doubly the duty of servants, who, not only by the general precepts of religion, but by the situation of life in which they are placed, are bound to bear such language patiently, not to answer again¹, upon no account to render "railing for railing²." Nothing in their master's conduct can ever excuse such language in them.

There is perhaps no apostolical precept relating to the duty of servants more comprehensive than that, which is twice given by St. Paul, to serve "not with eye-service "as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, "fearing God³." *To serve with eye-service*, is when servants or labourers put on an appearance of activity and diligence while a master's eye is upon them, and seem then to be hard at work; but, as soon as his back is turned, indulge themselves in idleness. Those, who act thus, act as if they regarded men only, and had none of the fear of God before their eyes. They ought to remember, though their master on earth be absent and unable to watch them, yet that they have a Master in heaven whose eye is unceasingly upon them. They should remember, that their time belongs to him who pays them for

¹ Tit. ii. 9.² 1 Pet. iii. 9.³ Col. iii. 22. and Eph. vi. 5, 6.

it. If they are idle, or waste their time, they rob their master of his due, and are guilty of positive dishonesty.

Against another kind of dishonesty they are warned by the apostle, when he cautions them against “purloining¹.” To purloin is secretly to make away with, secretly to steal their master’s property, either for their own use or for some other person. A servant often has many articles belonging to his master within his reach, which he may possibly make away with without being discovered. If he *purloins* them, if, without his master’s consent, he takes any thing and converts it to his own use, he is doubly criminal. He is guilty not only of breaking the eighth commandment by stealing, but also of a breach of trust, which, according to the laws both of God and man, greatly aggravates the offence. His guilt is much the same, whether he applies to his own use what he takes, or gives it to some other person. By giving away what does not belong to him, he may, from unthinking or designing people, gain the praise of good nature and generosity; in reality, however, he is guilty of gross dishonesty—is guilty of *purloining*—and of betraying the trust reposed in him. In short, a servant should never take or give away any thing in his master’s absence, which he would

¹ Tit. ii. 10.

not equally take or give away if he were present and looking on.

The apostle's caution against purloining is followed by an exhortation to "show of all good fidelity," or faithfulness.¹ A really *faithful* servant, a servant disposed to show "all good fidelity," will not only be diligent, and industrious, and scrupulously honest, but will be desirous of promoting his master's welfare by all the means in his power. Most particularly he will be careful never to tell what he hears in his master's house; never to reveal the secrets of the family, or to indulge in idle talk respecting his master's affairs. His master's property, his master's honour, and his master's secrets, must be all objects of his care and attention.

With regard to your behaviour towards your fellow servants, I should advise you, in the first place, to cultivate a general spirit of *harmony and good will*. I should say, nearly in the language of the prophet, Seek the peace of the family where ye dwell, for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace¹. No one can be ignorant, how much the condition of a servant is embittered by domestic quarrels and disagreements, where the servants in one house are divided against each other, three against two, and two against three: where there is such quarrelling and strife, "there is

¹ Jerem. xxix: 7.

"confusion and every evil work¹." Such a state is not only irksome and painful in a temporal point of view, but most dangerous to the safety of the soul. All the exhortations to Christians in general—"to love as brethren;" to "be at peace among" themselves; to "follow after the things which make for peace;" "showing all meekness unto all men²,"—are particularly to be borne in mind by servants. United together in one house, you are in that point of view, as well as in the higher sense, to look upon yourselves as members of one body, and are peculiarly bound to cultivate peace and good will, and that spirit of charity which is the bond of perfectness. You must endeavour to love your fellow-servants as yourselves, and in all your behaviour towards them to do as you would be done by; strive, in compliance with the exhortation of the apostle, to put away from you "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you³." Be careful never to give or to take offence. Be watchful over your own hearts and tempers, and never give way to those emotions of ill-humour, peevishness,

¹ James iii. 16.

² 1 Pet. iii. 8. 1 Thess. v. 13. Rom. xiv. 19. Titus iii. 1.

³ Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

or anger, which oftentimes become a root of bitterness, and lead on to variance and strife. Instead of giving way to such bad tempers, it is both your interest and your duty to be kind and obliging in your behaviour, ready to perform mutual good offices, willing to assist your fellow-servants in their work, and in every way to promote their comfort and happiness. Never say, either to them or to your master, that *it is not your place* to do this or that, but be ready to assist in any way that you can. Towards both cultivate an humble temper and behaviour. Humility is the parent of many Christian graces, while pride is the source of much and great evil. "Only by pride cometh contention¹," says the wise man. It is from pride and self conceit, that most of the quarrelling and ill humour, the angry and reproachful language, the impatience and discontent, which sometimes are found in servants, have their origin. The lesson which our blessed Lord was most anxious to teach, both by precept and his own example, was the lesson of being *meek and lowly in heart*.

Above all, be willing and anxious, as you have opportunity, to set forward the salvation of the souls of those, who are united with you in the same service. If they are ignorant, instruct them; if they are careless and inconsiderate, admonish and check them,

¹ Proverbs xiii. 10.

where you can do it without offence. In every way be desirous of impressing on their minds a serious conviction of the awful and engaging truths of religion.

Where there are servants of different sexes—in other words, young men and young women—in a family, let them remember that they can hardly be too guarded in their behaviour towards each other. You must, almost of necessity, be much thrown in each other's way. Take heed lest your state of life be unto you, in this respect, an occasion of falling. Never allow yourselves in any lightness of behaviour. Never utter with your lips any immodest language, any of that foolish talking and jesting¹, against which St. Paul warns you. The consequence of allowing or indulging in any improper liberties, may be most dreadful. If they lead on, as they too frequently do, to the deadly sin of fornication, the young woman brings a stain on her name, which is scarcely ever washed away. She exposes herself to contempt and reproach, and to numberless distresses and vexations. The partner of her guilt has not only the bitter thought that he has ruined a fellow-creature, but often brings upon himself a variety of troubles, and perhaps an expense which he is unable to pay, and which may tempt him to fly from his

¹ Ephesians v. 4.

country and his friends. And, what is of far more consequence, they have both exposed themselves to the wrath of God, and to the punishment of eternal fire; for they have committed that sin, of which it is expressly said, that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is true that this sin, as well as other offences, will be forgiven to those who repent, through the atonement of Christ, but their repentance must be deep and bitter; and whether they will repent at all is uncertain. And even though one party should by the grace of God be brought to repentance, yet the other may continue hardened; and how dreadful will be the reflection, that you have, for the gratification of your appetite, contributed to the ruin of an immortal soul!

In the last place, I wish to offer you some advice respecting the duties which you owe peculiarly to God. And here I most earnestly exhort you, however much your attention may and ought to be occupied by the service of your earthly master, never to forget that you have a Master in heaven, who is entitled to the *first* place in your thoughts and affections. Never forget for a moment that you *must*—and you know not how soon *will* be called to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ;—that you are hastening on

¹ Gal. v. 21. and Eph. v. 5.

to an eternal state, either of happiness or misery; and that, consequently, the care of your soul is the one thing needful, is a concern of inexpressibly greater importance than any thing else. Some servants, it is too probable, are ignorant of the fundamental truths of religion. At your age, and in this country, such ignorance is disgraceful and criminal. In some cases it may, in part, be chargeable upon your friends. Might you not however have done much towards removing it yourselves? However this may be, endeavour to remove it now. Diligently seize and improve every opportunity of procuring religious information. If your masters or mistresses are disposed to instruct you, be thankful to them, and let not the pains they take be thrown away upon you. In short, seek religious knowledge from your fellow-servants, from your friends, and by regular attendance at church. If you can read, often take opportunities of reading the Scriptures, and religious books. If you cannot read, endeavour to learn;—not so much with a view to the advantage which you may derive from it in this life, as from a desire to advance in the knowledge and practice of true religion. Above all, be regular and fervent in private prayer. Never rise in the morning, nor go to rest at night, without addressing yourselves to God for grace and

help. Implore him to give you all Christian virtues, and to guard you against all temptations ;—those virtues especially which you particularly need ; and those temptations to which your state of life is peculiarly exposed. Some of you perhaps will tell me, that you have not time for these things. I certainly mean nothing that I have said, to make you, in any way, neglect your master's business, or interfere with the duties of your calling. Make the most however of the time and opportunities which you have ; and especially let as large a portion as possible of the Lord's day be given to the performance of religious duties, to devout attendance in church, to private prayer and meditation, and to the acquiring of religious knowledge. Those who are most busily occupied during the week may often, while at their work, raise their thoughts to heavenly subjects, and offer short ejaculations of prayer and praise to the Giver of all good things.

Finally, be ever on your guard against pride and self-conceit ; according to the advice of St. Peter¹, “ be clothed with humility,” and willing to “ be subject one to another.” Be obedient and faithful to your masters. Be kind to your fellow-servants : always ready to help them, and never con-

¹ 1 Peter v. 5.

senting to lead or to follow them into sin. Be humble and pious towards God, and continually mindful of that solemn account which you must one day give before the tribunal of Christ.

May he who is the Maker of us all, in whose sight all men are equal, keep you in the paths of true religion, and prepare you, through the merits of your Redeemer, to hear the gracious invitation, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!

A Prayer for Servants.

(Abridged from the New Manual).

O Lord, my God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, I bless and praise thee for all thy mercies to my soul and body.

I humbly beseech thee for the sake of Jesus Christ, to pardon all my sins.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me; give me a true faith, and grant that I may delight in thy commandments, and walk before thee in faithfulness and honesty.

Enable me to do the duty of my place, not with eyeservice, but with singleness of heart. Keep me from all reproachful and immodest language, from lying and slandering, and from all dishonest actions; make me always humble, thankful, and contented, both towards thee, and towards man.

Bless this whole family to which I belong, and sow in all our hearts the seeds of unfeigned charity ; that we may all enjoy the comfort of mutual affection, and of mutual help in our several places.

And grant, that being protected by thy providence, directed by thy word, and assisted by thy Holy Spirit, we may be admitted into thy kingdom in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord ; in whose holy name and words I continue to pray.

Our Father, &c.

SERMON XXXIII.

DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

ROM. xiii. 1.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”

It is one of the excellences of our holy religion, that it extends to every part of our temper and conduct. Not only does it inculcate piety towards God, and the acknowledged virtues of humility, temperance, justice, and charity, but it enters into the various relations of social life, and points out the peculiar duties which belong to each of them.

Among the several duties, which it thus enforces upon us as members of society, is that of obedience to civil government—the duty of quiet submission to the established laws and constitution of the country, in which the providence of God has placed us. This duty is inculcated in many parts of the holy Scriptures, but most strongly and remark-

ably in the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

At the time when St. Paul wrote this Epistle, there was peculiar necessity for insisting on this subject. Many of the Jews, of whom there were considerable numbers residing at Rome, appear to have entertained the idea, that having received their laws immediately from God himself, and having for a course of years been governed under his immediate protection, they were not only exempted from paying obedience or tribute to any heathen government, but could not pay it without being guilty of a sort of rebellion against God. It was this notion that occasioned the question to our Saviour, as to the lawfulness of paying tribute to the heathen emperor of Rome. It is probable too that some of the early Christians so far misunderstood the nature of their religion and of that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, as to imagine that it allowed them to refuse submission to authority merely human, especially when that authority was placed in the hands of heathens and idolaters. They might be the rather tempted to encourage these mistaken opinions, because the Roman emperors, to whom the greatest part of the world then known was in subjection, had originally acquired their power by violence, exercised it in a despotic manner, and were generally in their personal characters de-

praved and dissolute. At all events, we know, that their enemies represented them as being turbulent men who turned the world upside down, as movers of sedition, and enemies to established governments.

Against these mistaken notions, dangerous in themselves, and calculated to bring discredit upon the Christian religion,—to cause the word of God to be evil-spoken of¹,—St. Paul anxiously cautions his converts. Neither their spiritual privileges, whether as Jews or Christians, on the one hand, nor any defects in the personal characters or original title of their rulers on the other, could set them at liberty to refuse obedience as subjects. Religion requires quiet submission to the established government and laws. “Let every soul”—whether Jew or Christian, whether learned or unlearned, whether rich or poor—“let every soul,” without exception, “be subject unto the higher powers.”

St. Paul was so anxious to enforce this duty of obedience to government, that in the direction which he gives to Titus, and, through him, to all succeeding ministers of the Gospel with respect to their public instructions, he particularly mentions the inculcation of this duty. “Put them in mind,” says he, “to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates.” We may here remark,

¹ Titus ii. 5.

² Titus iii. 1.

by the way, that so far is the subject of obedience to government from being a subject which the ministers of religion do well to avoid, that it is particularly pointed out to them by St. Paul as a subject on which they ought to insist.

St. Paul enforces this duty by the most powerful argument, by asserting that it is required of us by the obedience which we owe to God himself. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God."

Civil government of some sort, is not only absolutely essential to the peace and well-being of society, but is to be regarded as the institution of God himself; who, when he first created man, intended him to live in orderly society, not in savage wildness with his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him. I say, civil government *of some sort*, for the Scriptures nowhere appear to prescribe any particular form of government, or to say whether the supreme power should be placed in the hands of *one*, or of *a few*, or of *many*.

If, however, civil government is to be looked upon as the ordinance of God, it then necessarily follows, as it is said in the next verse, "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves *damnation*;" shall be deservedly condemned

to punishment in this world, and shall be in danger of eternal condemnation in the world to come, for their disobedience to the divine law.

The next verse suggests the great reason for which civil government was instituted; "For rulers are not a terror to good works, " but to the evil."

Although civil government in its origin be of divine appointment, yet its particular form, and laws, and regulations, are of human institution, and like all human institutions must be expected to be full of imperfections. And even, were they not so in themselves, yet being administered by such a weak and sinful being as man, there will in the administration of them be always many faults to be found. Still, the general object and tendency of government are, the protection of the persons and property of its subjects, the encouragement of what is good, and the prevention or punishment of what is bad. Those, consequently, who wish to live quietly, and to cultivate in themselves and others habits of piety and virtue, generally regard government as a friend, and rejoice in the protection afforded by it; while it is an enemy to those, whose wishes and practices are evil, who would be glad to own no law but their own will. As religion is rejected and opposed by men, whose sins and vices, make it their interest that religion should be false;

so the persons who, in any country, are most ready to rise in active and forcible resistance to the established government, are generally those whose actual crimes, or whose inclination to iniquity, make them unable to bear the restraint which government imposes on them. They are against the laws, because the laws are against them. I say, *generally*, for there may possibly be some exceptions; and I speak of *violent* and *forcible resistance*, as distinguished from that temperate opposition to those by whom the government is administered, which the established constitution itself may allow, and which is often useful.

It is on account of the protection, which the orderly and well-disposed—the quiet in the land—receive from government, that we are in another place directed to pray for its preservation. “I exhort, therefore, that, first
“ of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions,
“ and giving of thanks, be made for all men;
“ for kings, and for all that are in authority¹;
and why? “ That we may lead a quiet and
“ peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”

“ Wilt thou,” then, continues St. Paul, “ not
“ be afraid of the power? do that which is
“ good, and thou shalt have praise of the
“ same.” If you do that which is *good*, if you keep your passions, and lusts, and appetites, under the control of reason and religion,

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

and live in obedience to the laws of God and man, the government which you live under, so far from being an irksome restraint upon you, or an object of fear and dread, is to be regarded, generally speaking, in the light of a protector and friend, disposed to encourage and applaud your good conduct: "Thou shalt have praise of the same."

"But," says the Apostle, "if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil¹."

It has been argued, and with much force and appearance of reason, that it is only inasmuch as civil government is the institution of God, and derives its authority from him, that it has a right to use the *sword*, to inflict capital punishment. Certainly, the civil power should be very backward to use the sword, and should never cut off any of its subjects, and send them to that place where is no repentance, but with the greatest caution and reluctance. The power over man's life belongs to *Him* by whom man was created. He can delegate that power to his ministers on earth; and it appears from this passage of St. Paul, and from other places of Scripture, that he has so delegated it. But then, as I said before, this power is not to be

¹ Rom. xiii. 4.

exercised except in cases of apparent necessity, and recourse should be had to almost any mode of punishment rather than to this.

The fear of punishment by human laws is a necessary and wholesome restraint upon those, who are not properly influenced by a sense of duty to God. The sense of religious obligation, however, is the best and strongest safeguard to obedience. The Apostle accordingly continues, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." You must be subject—must obey the laws of your country—not only for wrath,—not only from fear of the temporal punishment to which disobedience would expose you,—but also for conscience sake, from a sense of the duty which you owe to God. It is in the same spirit that in the book of Ecclesiastes the wise man says, "I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God¹."

The well-known passage in St. Peter's first Epistle is very similar to this of St. Paul, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake:"—*for the Lord's sake*, answers to the *conscience sake* in the Epistle to the Romans:—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as

¹ Eccles. viii. 2.

“supreme; or unto governors, as unto those
“that are sent by him for the punishment of
“evil-doers, and for the praise of them that
“do well.”

The same considerations also extend to the payment of taxes. “For for this cause,” continues St. Paul, “pay ye tribute also; for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing².” The right of civil government to receive tribute, or taxes, arises from the circumstances of its being of divine appointment, from the protection which it affords to persons and property, from its being a terror to evil-workers and an encouragement to those that do well, from its attending continually upon this very thing. Money raised by public tribute and customs ought, doubtless, to be administered with the utmost economy. Profuseness in the public expenditure is in many points of view a great evil, and throws blame upon those to whom it is to be attributed. But the evil will appear the less, when the money thus raised returns into the country again, and is spent in articles of manufacture and commerce, and in finding employment for the artisan and labourer. The duty respecting public taxes prescribed by St. Paul, is to pay them honestly and fairly. “For this cause, “pay ye tribute also:” and again, “Render

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14.

² Rom. xiii. 6.

“therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom.” In the same manner our blessed Lord himself, when asked whether it was lawful to pay tribute to a heathen and foreign sovereign, answered, “Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s¹.”

But St. Paul, in the passage before us, requires us not only to pay tribute and custom where they are due, but also to render “fear to whom fear” is due, “honour to whom honour.” The office and dignity of the supreme ruler in any state ought always to be treated with respect and honour. Whatever defects may be supposed to exist in the personal character of any sovereign—and from defects of some sort no human being is free—still, these do not set his subjects at liberty to withhold that honour and respect which is due to his office.

Such, then, appears to be the Scripture doctrine with respect to the duty of subjects. It requires dutiful obedience to the laws of the country in which we live, and a reasonable respect and deference for those by whom the government is administered. Religion does not require implicit and servile subjection to the will of any man, however high in authority; or undistinguishing approbation

¹ Matt. xxii. 21.

of the measures of any government; but it enjoins a quiet submission to the laws of the land. I may add, that both the spirit and the precepts of religion would incline us to view the conduct of our rulers in as favourable a light as it is fairly capable of, and to make all proper allowances for the various and manifold difficulties of their situation. At the same time they would check a disposition to exaggerate their faults and failings, to condemn them without proof, or to impute their conduct to unworthy motives. "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought," says the book of Ecclesiastes¹; and it is written in the law of Moses, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people²." Those "presumptuous, self-willed" men, who "despise government," and "are not afraid to speak evil of dignities,"—who "speak evil of the things they understand not,"—who, "while they promise liberty, are themselves the servants of corruption," are compared by St. Peter to "natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed³." In proportion as *self-will*, *presumption*, *vanity*, or a desire to "walk after the flesh," in the ways of unrighteousness, prevail either in the governors or the governed, civil dissensions will more and more increase and multiply.

¹ Eccles. x. 20. ² Acts xxiii. 5. and Exod. xxii. 28.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 10, 12, 19.

They will lead the rulers to be guilty of oppression, and the people to fall into disaffection, turbulence, and sedition.

Let us implore God by his grace to subdue these evil principles both in ourselves and in others, and to increase in all parties public spirit, humility, meekness, and charity¹. Let us ever remember, that civil government is not only most useful and necessary in itself, but is to be looked upon as the ordinance of God, and that submission to it is a religious duty, which we are to pay *for the Lord's sake*. Let us keep in mind the injunction in the Old Testament, "Fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change²." Let us remember the admonition of St. Peter in the New Testament, "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king³."

¹ See the Christian Duty of Obedience to Rulers, by the Rev. R. Whately.

² Prov. xxiv. 21.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 17. See "Christian Politics," price 6d. Rivingtons.

THE END.

